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TAKES OVER**

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**DEFENDERS
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Luke Cage heads up our
mighty Marvel preview

50

**MUST-SEE
TV SHOWS**

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JUSTICE LEAGUE // DON'T BREATHE // THE KILLING JOKE
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING // CELL // MARJORIE LIU
GUILLERMO DEL TORO // KILLJOYS // SCREAM QUEENS

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BIG Chief Studios Ltd. is proud to announce a licensing deal with ITV Ventures Limited to produce a range of high-end collectables based on the classic series **Thunderbirds** and other series from the **Gerry Anderson Portfolio**.

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If you're a reader of our magazine then the chances are you have your own list of shows you keep up with. Myself, I'm following *Outcast* and *Wayward Pines* (while watching *Buffy* and *Angel* from the beginning), and by the time this issue comes out I'll be Netflix-binging the excellent-looking *Stranger Things*. You'll have our verdict next issue.

All you TV acolytes will know that this is a never-ending cycle – once one show ends, there'll be something equally exciting to take its place. And in this issue, we have the shows that will be vying for a place on your must-watch list – 50 of them, to be precise.

From the returning likes of *Supergirl* and *Doctor Who* to future hits-in-the-making *Westworld*, *Luke Cage*, *American Gods* and more, we have everything you could possibly want from the small screen in one place, accompanied by exclusive interviews with both the stars themselves and the creative minds who steered them past the Pilot stage.

It isn't just about TV though. In what has to rank as one of our best interviews ever, we take a trip with Guillermo del Toro himself through 'Bleak House' – his own personal archive of movie memorabilia – as we discuss his career, his inspirations and what's next. Plus, we report back from the set of Fede Alvarez's terrifying *Don't Breathe*, have a disturbing conversation with Mark Hamill about reprising the role of the Joker in *Batman: The Killing Joke*, and get cosy with the lovely folks at Big Finish to find out how they both kept *Doctor Who* alive through its darkest times, and are keeping it going today.

In short, there's something for everyone. The TV revolution hasn't started; it's simply carrying on.

Steve

Steve Wright
Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS

Despite the misleading title, this isn't just another YA fantasy adaptation. Far from it. MR Carey's bestseller, which is being brought to the screen by Colm McCarthy (who as anyone who has seen *Peaky Blinders* will testify, doesn't do PG-13) and stars top-drawer dramatic actors like Glenn Close and Paddy Considine, has the potential to be one of the year's best. Coupling hair-trigger suspense with a world that is more *28 Days Later* than *The Hunger Games*, *The Girl With All The Gifts* has a lot going for it, and we absolutely can't wait to see it.



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THE CAST ON WHAT TO EXPECT FROM FLASHPOINT



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MEET THE TEAM

Q. Which upcoming TV show are you most looking forward to?



James Hoare
Editor in Chief

A. Luke Cage
We're due a series that isn't whiter than Cap's high-school year book.



Steve Wright
Editor

A. Westworld
HBO is due another home run – hopefully this is it.



Jonathan Hatfull
Features Editor

A. American Gods
Bryan Fuller adapts Neil Gaiman with cast ripped from my dreams. Hell yes.



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Senior Staff Writer

A. Dimension 404
Partly for the cool premise, but mostly for the amazing cast.



Jon Wells
Art Editor

A. Powerless
Have you been involved in an accident recently that wasn't your fault?



Jen Neal
Production Editor

A. Timeless
From the creator, of *Supernatural* so it'll start strong... right?



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WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE JUSTICE LEAGUE

Here's the latest on Wonder Woman,
Aquaman and more... WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

008 WATCHMEN



Are the ultimate antiheroes about to join the DC Universe?

009 CELL



Behind the scenes on Samuel L. Jackson and John Cusack's Stephen King reunion

010 K-SHOP



Why this home-brewed horror fable is 2016's most important movie

012 SCREAM QUEENS



The cast of MTV's over-the-top Hammer homage look to Season Two

We know, we know: *Suicide Squad* isn't even out yet, but we're already analysing every piece of *Justice League* news we come across. But what's the point of being a fan if you're not going to give it 100 per cent, right? Here's what we've learnt over the last few weeks...

It already has a synopsis

And it reads as follows: "Fuelled by his restored faith in humanity and inspired by Superman's selfless act, Bruce Wayne enlists the help of his newfound ally, Diana Prince, to face an even greater enemy. Together, Batman and Wonder Woman work quickly to find and recruit a team of metahumans to stand against this newly awakened threat."

And then it goes on to list the members of the Justice League, and there's something about it being too late to save the planet, yadda yadda – you get the idea. It's more or less what we expected. Perhaps there will be more detail later down the line. Wonder Woman's solo film might have an effect on the story just like *Dawn Of Justice* has, seeing as it is set to hit cinemas five months before *Justice League*. Then again, *Wonder Woman* is meant to be more of a prequel.

Vulko is going to be in it

When curveball Willem Dafoe was added to the cast back in April, there was a lot of speculation among fans as to who he would be playing, with guesses ranging from Jay Garrick and Martian Manhunter to an ageing Oliver Queen. As it turns out, he'll be taking on the role of Vulko, a regular in the *Aquaman* mythos. But who is he? Well, in the comics, Nuidis



Wonder Woman and Batman will unite the seven – but will Superman be in tow?

Vulko is the chief scientific adviser of Atlantis and mentor to Aquaman. He's also a long-time friend of his family, having been present at the future King of Atlantis's birth. He's the go-to for help on all things medical and scientific, and a most trusted advisor. This will be Dafoe's first time playing a good guy in a comic-book movie, having thoroughly creeped us out as Norman Osborn in *Spider-Man*, but we're sure he'll still be incredible.

Steppenwolf is the main villain

Steppenwolf first appeared in *New Gods* Vol 1 #7 way back in 1972, and has been stirring shit up ever since. He's an immortal being with superhuman strength, speed, endurance and reflexes, and a highly talented military leader. Interestingly, he's also the uncle of

Darkseid, whose winged minions known as Parademons were believed to have popped up in Batman's dream sequence/vision of the future in *Batman V Superman*. Steppenwolf has actually kind of been in the DC Extended Universe already; he made a quick appearance in *BVS*'s deleted 'Communion' scene, in which Lex Luthor attempts to communicate with a hologram of him while aboard the Kryptonian ship.

The tone will be light

Well, lighter than *BVS*, thank the movie gods. According to a fair few of the journalists that were invited on a *Justice League* set visit in June, the film contains moments of colour, humour and personality. Zack Snyder even went so far as to say the characters are "inherently, sort of this larger-than-life, big, fun."

Likewise, Gal Gadot told *SlashFilm*: "It's funny, it's different, each and every character brings their own flavour and colour to the team." After *BVS*, that is quite a claim. But you know what? We haven't given up on the DC Extended Universe just yet. We have faith that Snyder, Affleck and the rest of them can drag the franchise out of the dark.

Justice League will be released in cinemas on 17 November 2017.

Which of the Justice League solo films are you most excited to see?

52%

Wonder Woman

21%

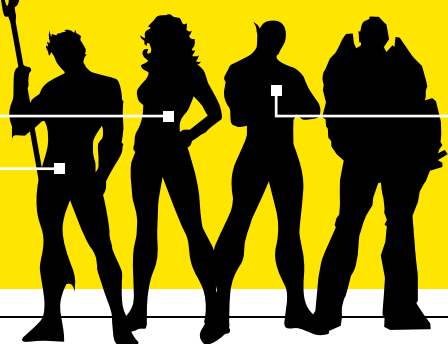
The Flash

21%

Aquaman

6%

Cyborg



WORDS CHRIS ANDERSON

WATCHMEN JOIN THE REGULAR DC UNIVERSE

How and why DC brought *Watchmen* into its world

DC Comics has been dropping major hints that characters from its mainstream superhero universe will soon be meeting up with those from its critically acclaimed (and entirely separate) 1986 limited series, *Watchmen*. It's a major theme running through the company-wide Rebirth event this summer, designed to shake up the status quo by relaunching characters in new series and restoring some of the old favourites absent from the previous New 52 line-up.

So far, we've seen the original Wally West – in his old yellow and red Kid Flash costume – arrive back in the DC Universe and reveal that an outside force had tampered with the reality he knew to create the New 52. It meant removing ten years from that continuity, and certain relationships, characters and

memories along with it. Through Wally, it looks like we'll be getting some of that restored, but he's warned that the person responsible will not be happy. Could he be talking about Dr Manhattan, the only super-powered character from the classic *Watchmen* series?

The simple answer is yes, as confirmed by Geoff Johns, who wrote the *DC Universe: Rebirth* one-shot that kick-started the event, telling *USA Today*: "If you're going to have a conflict between optimism and pessimism, you need to have someone who represents a cynical view of life and also has the ability to affect this. I know it's crazy, but he felt like the right character to use."

Some readers had spotted other clues before Johns' admission, with elements of the *Rebirth* one-shot echoing the

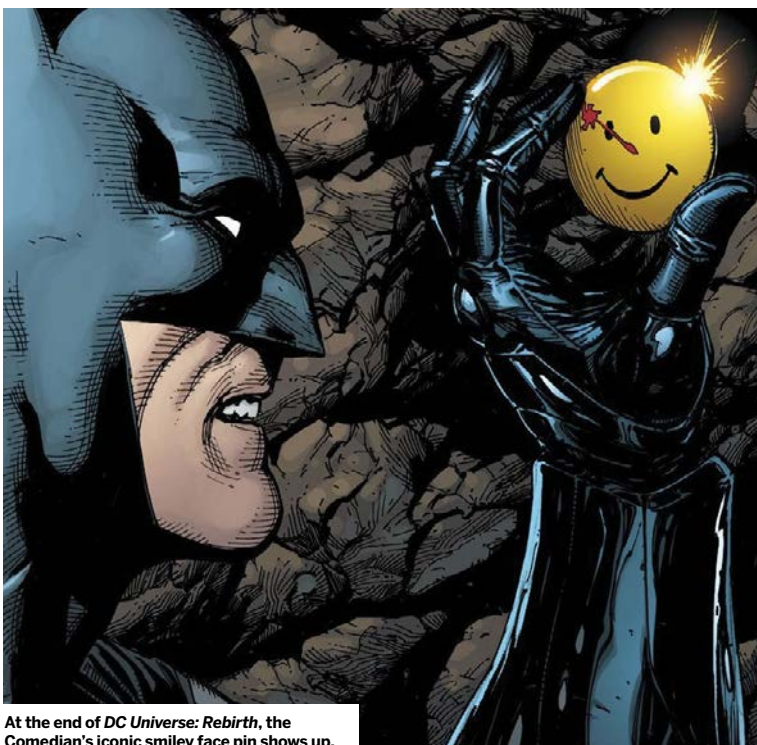
structure and storytelling of *Watchmen*. Then there was the cliffhanger at the end, showing that a small object had followed Wally into the Batcave from wherever he had escaped – the bloodied smiley face badge worn by the Comedian that opens the *Watchmen* story.

It raises questions too. For example, have the *Watchmen* characters been hiding in plain sight for some time? If not, then who is Mr Oz in the *Superman* comics, watching the Man of Steel through surveillance screens, as Ozymandias might do? And at the end of *Watchmen*, when Dr Manhattan reveals that he wants to try his hand at creating life, was the result the New 52?

While some have praised this twist as completely unexpected and a stroke of genius, others are more sceptical. Writer Alan Moore always intended *Watchmen* to be a standalone story with meaningful literary values, rather than the endless soap opera he felt comics were at the time. To bring it in line with the regular DC Universe clearly undermines that idea. The British writer was similarly outraged when a *Before Watchmen* prequel series was announced in 2012.

But there is also DC's dilemma – if you have characters that are part of such a highly acclaimed series, does it make sense not to revisit them? Last October, it was revealed that Zack Snyder, who directed the movie adaptation of *Watchmen*, had met with HBO about the network creating a TV version, which may potentially be a follow-up. With Rebirth setting new rules for those characters and Snyder currently directing *Justice League*, this could take a very interesting turn.

Get more info at dccomics.com.



At the end of *DC Universe: Rebirth*, the Comedian's iconic smiley face pin shows up.



In a beautiful turn of events, Bryan Fuller has revealed that he has a plan for a fourth season of *Hannibal*. He just needs to figure out the technicalities. Delicious.

110%

How psyched we are for John Boyega to star in *Pacific Rim 2*.



Playmobil is officially releasing a range of *Ghostbusters* sets, making it one of the first of the brand's licensed products. Available in 2017.

3

The number of DC Comics TV adaptations Lynda Carter has been involved in now that she's been cast as the president in *Supergirl*.





THE GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL

Why we're super stoked for Spider-Man: Homecoming's amazing cast

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

Spider-Man: Homecoming has got a good thing going on. We're yet to see a trailer – it's not out for another year, after all – but we're already confident that it's going to be what Marvel's other new films need to live up to. Basically, we're getting good vibes, and that's down to one thing: the people involved, namely the cast.

Even though many fans hoped Peter Parker would be put to bed this time round in favour of Miles Morales, Marvel still opted for Peter, and got their regular good-looking young Caucasian actor. Frankly, it was hard to get excited about Tom Holland; on paper, he was basically like every other Marvel leading man.

However, just two scenes with him in *Captain America: Civil War* has proven

him to be kind of brilliant. He was funny, charming, likeable and just inherently Peter Parker. It was also nice to have a genuine kid (we're still counting 19 as a kid, right?) play him for a change. He made us excited about Spider-Man again.

But the cast supporting Holland, which still isn't complete at the time of writing, keeps going that little bit further to make us sure that *Homecoming* is going to be off the chain. Just when we think the film's IMDb page is looking as good as it could get, it goes and adds another cast member.

Obviously, Marisa Tomei, Robert Downey Jr and Michael Keaton's participation is enough to get anyone excited, but we're really looking forward to seeing the younger actors and actresses involved, like Tony Revolori (*The Grand*

Budapest Hotel), Angourie Rice (*The Nice Guys*), Abraham Attah (*Beasts Of No Nation*) and Laura Harrier (*4th Man Out*).

Even with its impressive box office results and ingenuity, Marvel is still lagging behind in one area: diversity. The studio has been doing a little better recently after prominently featuring African-American Sam Wilson in a couple of the heavy-hitting projects and giving Black Panther his own film, but there's still room for improvement. Hopefully, *Homecoming* will change that.

19-year-old actress and singer Zendaya was one of the first people to be cast after Holland, and although we don't know anything about her character, it looks like she's shaping up to be the leading lady. If she becomes the new Mary-Jane then *Homecoming* will have done something Marvel's other films haven't: feature a person of colour as a love interest for a white leading man. To many, this won't sound like that big a deal, but for some reason it hasn't happened, which is not only a shame; it's also kind of damaging. Perhaps *Spider-Man: Homecoming* will be the film to turn a corner.

Spider-Man: Homecoming will be released in cinemas on 7 July 2017.

TURN YOUR PHONE OFF!

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

Talking Stephen King and technology with the director of *Cell*

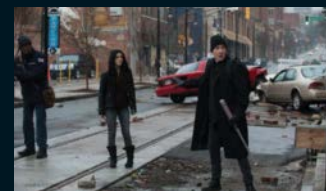
It's a great time to be a Stephen King fan at the moment. We've got *The Dark Tower* and *It* coming, and August sees the long-overdue release of *Cell*, based on his 2006 novel about a phone signal that turns most of the human race into a ravenous horde, starring John Cusack and Samuel L. Jackson.

"I've always been a fan of Stephen King," director Tod Williams tells us. "And with John Cusack, it seemed like a cool combination of people. Some of my favourite films are based on Stephen's work, there's always something recognisably genre and there's something distinctly Stephen."

The book's 'phones kill!' hook felt relevant back when it was published, and obviously still does now. "The more I worked on it, the more I felt like I was joining the opposition!" laughs Williams. "The sense of no longer being able to function without your phone, it's a genre reflection of what's actually happening – that's the pleasure of the concept to me."

The film's cast also includes Isabelle Fuhrman and Stacy Keach, and Williams tells us that working with them was one of his highlights. "John and Sam, when you're working with actors of that experience, they will never, ever give you a bad take. I think we were all interested in taking this sort of over-the-top idea and trying to bring it back to this human level."

Cell is at Horror Channel FrightFest 25 August, and in Cinemas and On Demand from 26 August.



DIVERSITY FOR THE WIN

Marvel movies we're still waiting for...

YOUNG AVENGERS



Various LGBTQIA characters, different races, humans, gods – it's the whole package.

MS MARVEL



How brilliant would it be if Marvel's next superhero was a teenaged Muslim girl? Very brilliant.

BLACK WIDOW



They keep saying it's on the way, but they're yet to deliver the goods. Hurry up!

26

The number of years it's been since Kiefer Sutherland starred in *Flatliners*. He obviously misses it, seeing as he's coming back for the remake.

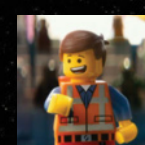
We'll be waiting a while for Alicia Vikander to land on our screens as *Tomb Raider's* Lara Croft: the film is confirmed for a 16 March 2018 release.



90%

Chance that Season Seven of *Game Of Thrones* will be delayed, so winter can come.

Bojack Horseman scribe Raphael Bob-Waksberg is stepping in to rewrite the script for *The Lego Movie 2*. Obviously WB want it to be really awesome.





HORROR CHANNEL FRIGHTFEST 2016 IS COMING

Here are the films you need to see

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

It's time for horror fans to plan their trip to London for a weekend of genre treats. This year's Horror Channel FrightFest has an incredible line-up of films from around the world. Here are five movies you can't miss:

The Woods

Adam Wingard and Simon Barrett are already enjoying 'Best horror film of the year' buzz. In a move away from the crowd-pleasing fun, this is a no-frills horror about teenagers lost in the woods.

Beyond The Gates

This stars Graham Skipper and Chase Williamson as brothers who take over their dad's video store, and end up in a nightmare world with Barbara Crampton.

The Love Witch

A gorgeously made tribute to

Seventies Euro-horrors and soap operas about a witch brewing up potions to find her true love.

We Are The Flesh

Approved by Alfonso Cuarón and Alejandro González Iñárritu, this debut from Emiliano Rocha Minter is a gruesome blend of sex, gore and madness.

31

Rob Zombie's films can hardly be described as 'filtered', so we're definitely interested to see what he does with the freedom that crowd funding allows. A cast of legends running from murderous clowns? We'll see you all at Murderworld!

Horror Channel FrightFest will run from 25-29 August at Vue Shepherd's Bush. For more information and tickets, visit www.frightfest.co.uk.



K-Shop uses genuine footage of Bournemouth's nightlife.

CANNIBAL KEBABS, SIDE OF SOCIAL COMMENTARY

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

Why Brit horror *K-Shop* is "incredibly relevant"

You'd be forgiven for thinking that a *Sweeney Todd*-esque horror set in a Bournemouth kebab shop might not have much to offer by way of sharp and relevant social commentary, but in the case of writer-director Dan Pringle's debut *K-Shop*, you'd be wrong.

"On the face of it, it probably does look like your fairly standard B-movie fare," laughs Pringle. "But hopefully there's a surprise under the bonnet. There's more depth to it."

The film stars Ziad Abaza as Salah, a student who takes over his late father's kebab shop and is faced with a torrent of abusive, bigoted and boozed-up customers. It's not long before he's pushed too far, and the lamb doner meat isn't what it used to be. However, Pringle's primary concern was always commentary over schlock, and Salah's struggle has a powerful resonance in our current political climate.

"When I first started writing it, I didn't anticipate it becoming as relevant as it

would be!" Pringle tells us. "And obviously in the weeks it's getting released it's incredibly relevant; racism just happens to be the number one subject on the agenda right now."

The film also provides a glimpse into the raucous, boozy Bournemouth nightlife, which provided Pringle with the starting point for his film. "It is an incredibly dramatic environment when you watch it sober," he explains. "I think it was quite important to make a comment about the nature of consumer culture ultimately consuming the consumer."

To ensure authenticity, Pringle actually used real footage of Bournemouth revellers. "About 60 per cent of the footage in those montage sequences is real," Pringle tells us. "People lobbing signs, weeing in doorways – all that stuff. And I think the film is definitely stronger as a result, because you just feel that relentlessness of that culture first hand."

K-Shop is in cinemas now.



"I'm gonna wreck it!" is what Wreck-It Ralph will be saying to the internet in 2018, as the creative team, including John C Reilly and Sarah Silverman, return for a sequel.

10

The number of new *Lost In Space* episodes there will be in 2018. Yes indeed, Netflix has confirmed that the classic series is getting a reboot.



AMC has renewed Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg's *Preacher* TV series. Which is great, as we weren't ready to have it taken away from us.

Roadside Picnic, the novel that inspired the Andrei Tarkovsky masterpiece *Stalker*, is getting a pilot. *Stoker's* Matthew Goode will star.



FIVE THINGS WITH JOHN GALLAGHER JR

Talking secrets, psychos
and bunkers with the star
of *10 Cloverfield Lane*

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

1 Secret files

Like everyone else, we only became aware of *10 Cloverfield Lane* when the trailer dropped, at which point we got very excited. When John Gallagher Jr, who plays Emmett, got sent the script, no one was giving much away. "It was called *Valencia*, aka *The Cellar*," he remembers. "I read the little description and thought, 'That's intriguing,' and of course my interest was piqued by seeing JJ Abrams' name as a producer. So I started reading it... I was totally hooked."

2 Keep your cards close

With just three characters in the bulk of the movie, the viewer is constantly trying to figure out who these people really are. "You don't want to give anything away!" he tells us. "I think people naturally put their own projections onto the story. I had several of my friends say that they were convinced that I was going to be the bad guy at the end somehow – that it would be the big twist!"

3 The greatness of Goodman

Emmett and Michelle (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) are both guests (or prisoners?) of John Goodman's imposing bunker owner Howard, and Gallagher Jr tells us the icon was just as impressive up close. "John is such a fantastic actor," he enthuses, "So the scenes where he really goes for broke were really fun to shoot, because all you had to do was just react to him. He was just killing it in every take. And then between takes he's just the sweetest guy in the world."

4 Nice guy or serial killer?

Shortly after *10 Cloverfield Lane*, Gallagher Jr played a sinister home invader in Mike Flanagan's *Hush*. "I had been trying to convince people to let me play psychopaths for years, and nobody would!" he laughs. "Then Mike Flanagan said, 'I believe that you can play this, I have no reason to believe it, because I've never seen you play anything like a psychotic serial killer, but I think you can do it!'"

5 Gunn + McLean = excitement

Next up is another horror: James Gunn and Greg McLean's *The Belko Experiment*, about a group of American expats working in Brazil who are forced to make some murderous choices. "I'm excited for that too!" he enthuses. "I thought, 'If you've got Greg McLean directing it that's really cool, and if you've got this great script by James Gunn – well, then I absolutely want to give that a go.' But it's so intense; it's a really wild adventure with some fantastic actors."

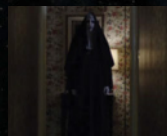
10 Cloverfield Lane is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.

© Rex



\$31,515,110

How much *The Purge: Election Year* made in its first weekend, making *The BFG*'s \$18m look measly.



The Nun from *The Conjuring 2* will be getting its own spin-off movie, following in the path of Annabelle the creepy doll.

12

sides of the die, as the *D&D* film keeps threatening to become a real thing, with Ansel Elgort tipped to star.



We're thrilled that Frances Conroy will be in the TV adap of Stephen King's *The Mist*.

CARRY ON SCREAMING

The cast and crew on what's coming up in Season Two of *Scream Queens*...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER INTERVIEWS ADAM TANSWELL

Scream Queens Season One was over the top, ridiculous and a bit of a blur. The finale left us with Dean Munsch (Jamie Lee Curtis) as a best-selling author, Hester Ulrich (Lea Michelle) exposed as the killer but still free, and the Chaneles (Emma Roberts, Billie Lourd and Abigail Breslin) locked up in a psychiatric unit, having been framed.

At the start of Season Two the Chaneles are still institutionalised, but Dean Munsch has bought the hospital in an attempt to make the world a better place. We spoke to co-creator Brad Falchuk and the cast to find out what's next for *Scream Queens*...

What's the deal with the hospital?

Brad Falchuk: [Munsch] has abolished the Greek system in the country because she's realised how horrible it is. She's written a book and travelled the world and said, "I need a new mission. I need a new battle." She identifies healthcare as her new battle, so [bought] a hospital.

The Chaneles remain institutionalised at the start of the new season.

How is Hester involved?

BF: People know who [the killer is] and so Hester is involved... In this hospital there's some funny business going on as well. [It's] a horror show, so there's an aspect of the show that involves murder and a killer, and in those ways Hester is going to be intimately involved with that.

Lea Michele: Intimately involved. With Harry Styles.

BF: Lea started this Harry Styles rumour and now it's a thing.

Emma Roberts: We want Bieber!

Keke Palmer: I want Michael Ealy. Please.

BF: We're going to have studly hot doctors be in there and populate the world to interact with our female characters.

Jamie Lee Curtis: We're starting a Twitter campaign, #studlyhotdoctors.

How did you feel about finding out that Hester was the killer?

ER: I feel like we kind of knew but we didn't know.

LM: No, we thought Grace was the killer.

ER: We did. But we'd all be sitting on set and at 2am thinking, "This person's the killer, this person's the killer. You're the killer, you're the killer," and she was right under our noses.

Why have you brought the characters back instead of doing an anthology series?

BF: It was much more of the horror movie way of looking at it, like a sequel, like [Jamie Lee Curtis] right here who, in *Halloween*, survives the first movie and then has to then face the second movie.

JLC: *Halloween 2* was in a hospital!

They're following *Halloween* all the way!

BF: The young characters also have room to grow, room to evolve, and especially in TV they're not supposed to change that much. Not like *American Horror Story*.

Is there anything you'd like to do in Season Two that you didn't in One?

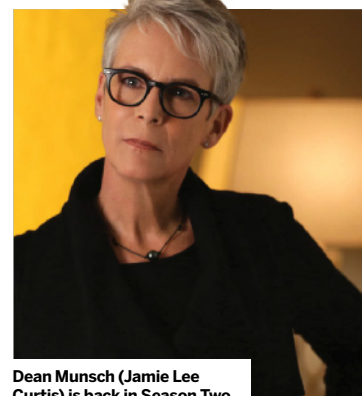
Abigail Breslin: I just want love. I just want Number 5 to have love from anybody in any formula.

LM: She wants a boyfriend.

ER: Get Number 5 a boyfriend, please!

JLC: Harry Styles!

Scream Queens Season Two will air on E4 later this year.

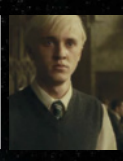


Dean Munsch (Jamie Lee Curtis) is back in Season Two.



Tony Stark is hanging up the Iron Man suit, and Riri Williams is taking over. Like Stark, she's a science genius, having enrolled in MIT at the age of 16.

40 Years it has been since the release of *The Man Who Fell To Earth* starring David Bowie, so it's getting a 4K restoration and hitting cinemas again this September.



The Flash is getting that little bit more magical; Draco Malfoy actor Tom Felton will be playing Barry's CSI co-worker Julian Dorn.



4 The number of *Walking Dead* actors to be promoted to series regular status, including Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Tom Payne, Austin Amelio and Xander Berkeley.



STAR TREKKIN' ACROSS THE UNIVERSE!

WORDS OLIVER PFEIFFER

The hive mind behind Star Trek parody *Unbelievable!!!!* tell us about their star-studded venture

Unbelievable!!!! is certainly an apt title for a low-budget independent feature film that boasts an endless roll call of *Star Trek* alumni recruited by a group of debuting filmmakers for their self-proclaimed 'Sci-Fry' parody.

"We cast people by going to conventions and introducing ourselves, presenting our scripts and asking the actors whether they'd like to participate in our film – that's what really got the ball rolling," claims director Steven L Fawcette, whose original idea spurred from a slapstick venture in the vein of *Airplane!* and *Naked Gun*.

"It just kept building and getting bigger and bigger, and at one point we decided to go all in on the *Star Trek* angle and get as many *Star Trek* stars as we could," he continues. "It then became like a *Mad*, *Mad World Of Star Trek*, and we ended up with 40 of them in the film!"



As William Shatner couldn't star, they created a puppet likeness instead.

The galaxy of stars from the franchise that appear in *Unbelievable!!!!* includes the likes of *The Next Generation*'s Deanna Troi (Marina Sirtis) and Lieutenant Worf (Michael Dorn), *Deep Space Nine*'s Quark (Armin Shimerman), *Voyager*'s Lieutenant Tuvok (Tim Russ) and The Doctor (Robert Picardo), *Enterprise*'s Lieutenant Malcolm Reed (Dominic Keating) and Dr Phlox (John Billingsley), along with two icons from *The Original Series* in Uhura (Nichelle Nichols, who's also co-produces) and Chekov (Walter Koenig). Non-*Trek* actors Michael Madsen and Gilbert Gottfried, who is playing the lead villain, also have key roles.

The late Leonard Nimoy was also approached. "He was definitely someone we really wanted, too," confirms producer Angelique Fawcette. "I had a friend who was a family member who told him on our behalf, but he was just too ill to do the role, and then sadly he passed."

A *Trek* icon who proved difficult to secure was William Shatner, yet it forced the filmmakers to innovate. "We really couldn't afford him, so I came up with this idea to have a marionette that looked like Captain Kirk, and this puppet became the iconic feature of the film," explains Steven Fawcette. "I ran that idea by Nichelle Nichols, who laughed for 20 minutes and

said it was a lot funnier than having some 80-year-old actor running around!"

As a result, *Unbelievable!!!!* has the added distinction of being the first time a movie has a puppet in the lead and also human actors within the same frame. "All the human actors are treating the puppet like it's a real actor, but that's part of the comedic charm of the thing, and that interaction is really very unique."

The film will be released in time for the 50th anniversary of *Star Trek* – a prospect that was originally unplanned. "We were working on it for five years, and wondered whether we were ever going to get it

completed. Now we're ready to release it, and it just happens to be the anniversary in September," explains Steven.

A highlight in the madcap trailer for *Unbelievable!!!!* is the apparent recreation of the infamous scene from *TOS* between Kirk and The Gorn. "We didn't want to infringe our Paramount copyright, so that reptile you see isn't exactly what the reptile looks like," says Angelique. "I can tell you, though, that the name of the reptile is Don Gornelius!"

Unbelievable!!!! will be released later in 2016.

Many former *Star Trek* actors have come back for the parody.



It turns out that Noomi Rapace's Elizabeth Shaw going to be appearing in *Alien: Covenant* after all, which is fantastic news.



11

The number of live-action versions of Superman now that Tyler Hoechlin has been confirmed to appear in *Supergirl*.



After a spooky three-season run, supernatural drama *Penny Dreadful* has sadly been cancelled by mutual agreement of Showtime, Sky Atlantic and creator John Logan.

3

The number of years before the film adaptation of *Wicked* hits cinemas (20 December 2019)



MEMORY BANK

Welcome to Memory Bank, the cosy corner of SciFiNow in which we flick through old issues and reminisce about the good old days. We haven't gone back too far this month, though; with *Star Trek Beyond* currently in cinemas, we thought it would be nice to have a look back at issue 80, which featured Kirk, Spock and 'John Harrison' on the cover for an 18-page *Into Darkness* exclusive.

In keeping with the theme, we also counted down our top ten heroes of Starfleet. The brilliant Ro Laren of *The Next Generation* started off the countdown, and was followed by the Abrams universe's George Kirk, William Riker of *TNG*, Kira Nerys of *Deep Space 9*, *TNG*'s Lieutenant Commander Worf, *DS9*'s Benjamin Sisko, *TOS*'s version of Mr Spock, *TNG*'s Jean-Luc Picard, and *TNG*'s Data, with (drumroll) Captain James T Kirk of *TOS* in the top spot.

As if that wasn't enough coverage to be getting on with, we also had a chat with the captain himself, William Shatner, about Kirk's legacy. "If they were to write a story about the Captain Kirk of my age, that's an interesting story," he said. "What does that hero, who now ages, what are his mental constraints, what would he do given that he's not one step slower but ten steps slower? What would he do in a dire situation? And does sagacity and wisdom take the place of impetuous action?"

Somehow, issue 80 wasn't all *Star Trek*, though. We also got a glimpse at the first season of *Defiance* with writer/producer Rockne S O'Bannon, investigated the *Superman* reboots you never saw, and ventured into the world of boy geniuses and butterflies with the co-writers and creators of hit cartoon *Venture Bros*.

BEST OF THE BILLBOARDS

Celebrating the best, worst and weirdest movie posters out there

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER



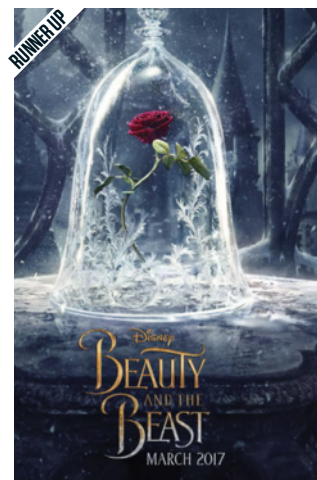
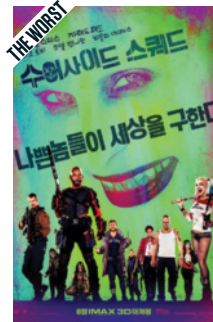
THE NEON DEMON

After a string of slightly disappointing posters for Nicolas Winding Refn's stylish horror *The Neon Demon*, this one popped up from out of nowhere and got us completely on board with its marketing campaign again. Just look at it. Look at that little skull 'O'. Everything about it screams style, sophistication and gore.



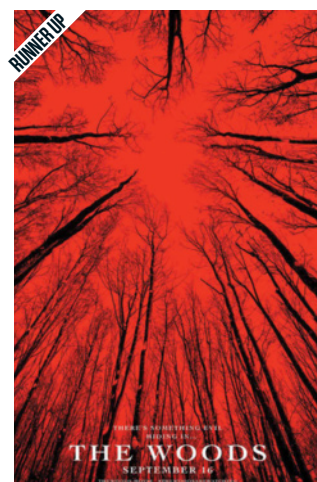
OUIJA: ORIGIN OF EVIL

This one isn't weird in the usual sense; it's weird in the sense of it being completely unexpected. The first *Ouija* film was, let's be honest, quite underwhelming, so we weren't expecting much from the sequel. But then it goes and whips out this gorgeous Eighties VHS-style poster. We don't know what to think anymore.



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

This magical, wintry delight wins the first runner-up prize, purely because of how emotional and nostalgic it's making us. Someone pass the tissues.



THE WOODS

Though it's not as pretty as some, this poster for Adam Wingard's *The Woods* is extremely striking, and somehow makes us feel a little uncomfortable.

SUICIDE SQUAD

We don't know what's going on in this international poster for *Suicide Squad*. We just know that we don't like it. Jared Leto's piercing Joker eyes make us feel like he's peeping into our bedroom through the gaps between the Venetian blinds, and he's not leaving until the police are called out. It's especially disappointing considering that it has followed a bunch of really good posters that gave us every faith in the film.



Cameron directs the classic cocooned woman sequence.

BEHIND THE BUG HUNT

Going behind the scenes of James Cameron's *Aliens* WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

With so much speculation swirling around Ridley Scott's *Prometheus* sequel, let's never forget that the *Alien* franchise already has one of the best sequels of all time: James Cameron's classic. Now, Titan Books is bringing us a new book of on-set photography, written by Simon Ward, which will take us behind the scenes of this iconic sci-fi classic. All together now: "GET AWAY FROM HER, YOU BITCH!"

Aliens: The Set Photography is available from 9 August, published by Titan Books.

The fearsome, terrifying Alien Queen is somewhat less imposing as a puppet, but no less awesome.



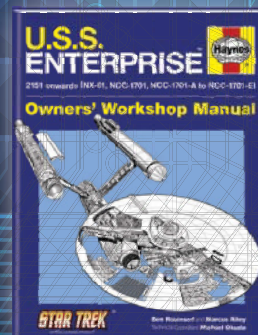
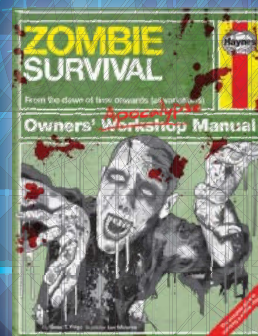
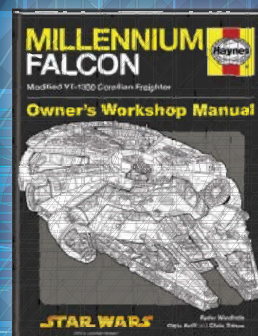
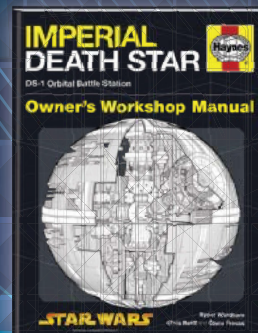
Carrie Henn (Newt) and Cameron confer on set, possibly on the best way to say "Mostly."



Lance Henriksen gets goosed up as Bishop, shortly after his encounter with the Alien Queen.



A WORLD OF
INFORMATION



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SURVIVE THE APOCALYPSE WITH THIS HANDY GUIDE

Author and undead enthusiast Sean T Page tells us why his book and app combo, *Zombie Survival: Owners' Apocalypse Manual*, could well save your life

Where did the idea for the *Zombie Survival: Owners' Apocalypse Manual* come from?

Haynes manuals cover everything from how to build a pre-1930s sewing machine to owning your own Death Star, but there was a serious gap around the preparation for a major zombie outbreak. I already had a library of survival content and plans – it was just a question of using the Haynes format, which is focused on a DIY style – so plenty of diagrams, facts and how tos.

So what is the manual about?

At its best, it's everything you need to know about surviving a zombie apocalypse. It includes step-by-step plans on how to defend your home, prepare your supplies and most importantly, deal with any zombies who manage to make it through your carefully placed traps. Like all Haynes books, this is about the facts and contains detailed instructions. At worst, it's an A4 hardback, so you can use it as a weapon against the dead.

Can you tell us a bit about the app?

The app is really a chance for us to spread the word about zombie survival in a different format. Some folks love the hardback book, and it's been a best-seller at Haynes since publication, but others want something different. The app has all of the key content from the book, but in a dynamic format and with a few extras thrown in. It's designed to be fun and educational. There are quizzes to complete, and you can even gain an authorised Ministry of Zombies identify card to help you during the apocalypse. The book and the app are designed to complement each other.

Are there any films or TV shows that were a particular influence?

I regard *Dawn Of The Dead* (1978) to be the definitive zombie movie. It's basically a training movie for anyone looking to increase their level of knowledge and preparedness. The 2008 remake of the same movie has also been invaluable to the zombie prepper community, bringing the zombie outbreak scenario

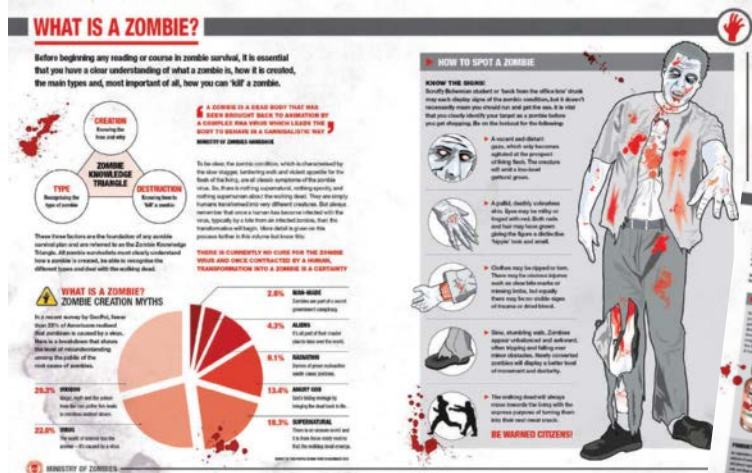


up to date. These movies are essential viewing for any zombie survival fan.

For you, what has been the definitive on-screen zombie portrayal?

I've already mentioned *Dawn Of The Dead*, but I would also dock my cap to the amazing power of the 'infected' in *28 Days Later* (2002). This film re-invented classic zombies, and although largely fictional (as opposed to *Dawn*, which is based on scientific facts), the new super-fast Brit-zombies did force all of us in the zombie survival industry to re-look at our plans and training.

Zombie Survival: Owners' Apocalypse Manual is available to buy now, published by Haynes, while the app will be available to download in August.



DAYS OF FUTURE NOW
Here are some upcoming UK conventions that you can't afford to miss...

Yorkshire Cosplay Con
8 August
Magna, Rotherham
www.yorkshircosplayconvention.com
Price: £7
Meet up with other like-minded Yorkshire people to share in your love of boss-level cosplay.

Sheffield Film and Comic Con
15-16 August
Motorpoint Arena, Sheffield
www.filmandcomicconsheffield.com
Price: £8-£15
Join other northern fans in celebrating all things geek at Sheffield's premier convention spot.

Film and Comic Con Glasgow
22-23 August
Braehead Arena
www.filmandcomicconglasgow.com
Price: £8-£15
Showmasters takes the party to Scotland, with special guests including James Marsters and Sean Astin.

Demoncon X
23 August
Royal Star Arcade, Maidstone
www.twitter.com/demoncon
Price: TBC
Lovers of all things comics and gaming can't afford to miss this intimate get together.

Melksham Comic Con
29-30 August
Melksham Assembly Hall
www.melkshamcomiccon.com
Price: £5-£10
Head down to this non-profit con that celebrates comics and art in all its forms.

Geekfest 2015
29-31 August
Heartlands, Durdance Ln, Redruth
tinyurl.com/j9ll2te
Price: TBC
This con is a whole weekend of activities for anyone who loves all things nerdy.

Bournemouth Film and Comic Con
29-30 August
Bournemouth International Centre
tinyurl.com/hwhp3nu
Price: £8-£15
Get geeky by the coast, with special guests including Julie Benz, Carl Weathers and Robert Llewellyn.

Mancster Con
29-30 August
Salford Media City
mancstercon.wordpress.com
Price: TBC
Support your local artist, both comics ones and otherwise, at this cozy and vibrant celebration.

ICE
5 September
The Studio, Birmingham
www.theiceshow.co.uk
Price: £6-£12
Comics fans based in the Midlands definitely shouldn't miss this festival of all the best comics.

Scifi Wales
5 September
Venue Cymru, Llandudno
www.scifi.wales
Price: £10-£15
Head on over for awesome stalls, great guests and more.



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This month, Poppy-Jay Palmer spoke to *Star Trek Beyond* stars Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Sofia Boutella, John Cho and Karl Urban, as well as director Justin Lin, about the ins and outs of the USS Enterprise, and what they love about the wonderful world of *Star Trek*.

Also, get the skinny on *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out Of The Shadows* with Jen Neal as she chats with Stephen Amell about the turtles, *Arrow*, his Canadian roots, and why he will always love Felicity Smoak.

Watch as we shout our opinions at you with our '5 Things You Need To Know About' video series, where we tear apart all the hottest genre blockbusters, including *Star Trek Beyond*, *Ghostbusters*, *Captain America: Civil War*, *The Huntsman: Winter's War*, *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*, *Deadpool*, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and more.

If mainstream isn't for you, join us as we talk to the cast and crew of the likes of *Midnight Special* and *The Other Side Of The Door*. Subscribe today, and keep calling back for news, reviews, interviews and more in a year that's jam-packed with amazing genre films and TV to get excited about!

COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Send your cosplay to @SciFiNow
or Facebook.com/SciFiNow



FREDDY KRUEGER

COSPLAYERS: ANDY TURNER AND KAREN EMERY FROM: DORSET PHOTOGRAPHER: JAMES SHEPPARD FACEBOOK: N/A TWITTER: N/A

1 THE CHARACTER

Andy's costume came first. He already had a Michael Myers mask and outfit, and wanted to get a Freddy one due to Robert Englund's guest announcement at the first Bournemouth Comic-Con. We found many masks and outfits online, but in the end found all the pieces to make the costume separately, as the quality and realism were far better. All of the items were ordered and purchased, mainly from America.

2 THE COSTUME

The sweater came handmade by Margret Olschewski. When it was delivered, Andy and I decided that the sweater looked too plain and clean, so then came the task of weathering the fabric. We were very happy with the end results. We were even happier when Robert Englund himself told us that it was one of the best Freddy Krueger costumes he had seen, and went on to say how realistic and accurate the sweater was!

3 THE DESIGN

My costume came about because we thought it would be funny to do a Mr and Mrs Krueger couple theme, which went down very well with other cosplayers and people at the event. I bought my costume almost completely off the shelf. Andy burned and weathered my hat, which was the only modification made to my outfit. But the glove, like most, didn't fit me, as my hands are way too small for it!

4 THE ACCESSORIES

The legendary Freddy glove that we used was, at the time, the very latest release from NECA. We thought this was the best glove for the job due to the finish, style, and worn brown leather used in making it. Andy then weathered the trousers, which were originally bought as suit trousers, and sourced the Fedora from a hat-makers shop in London. He then cut and ripped the hat to give it an authentic look.

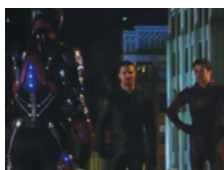
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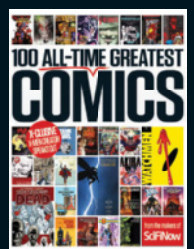
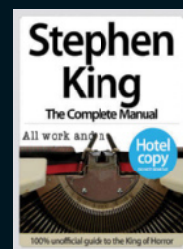
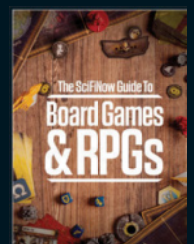
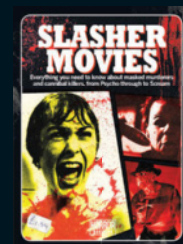
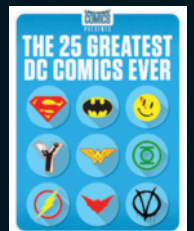
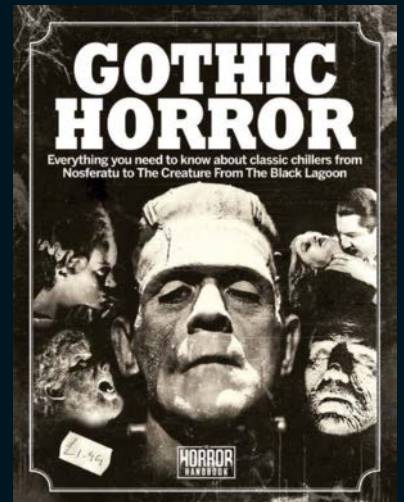
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50 MUST-SEE TV SHOWS

JOIN US AS WE COUNT DOWN A HALF CENTURY OF SMALL-SCREEN FUTURE HITS WITH THE CAST AND CREATORS OF YOUR NEW AND CURRENT FAVOURITE SHOWS...

WORDS STEVE WRIGHT, JONATHAN HATFULL, POPPY-JAY PALMER, ABIGAIL CHANDLER

KEY

DC TV	MARVEL HEROES	NETFLIX	BRITISH SCI-FI	ADULT SCI-FI	HORROR	COMEDY	ANIMATION	FANTASY	TIMEY WIMEY



DC TV

WHERE'S WALLY?

The youngest West is suiting up in Season Three

One dangling thread from Season Two was the fallout from the particle accelerator experiment intended to give Barry back his powers – the apparent failure of which saw Wally West (Keiynan Lonsdale) caught up in its aftermath. And there will be consequences, as evidenced by recent pictures courtesy of The CW that show him suiting up as Kid Flash. Whether that will be in this timeline or another is unclear, but whatever happens, it looks like we'll bear witness to another speedster.

Of her on-screen brother, Patton has nothing but positive words. "There is a youthfulness about him, so I think he adds a sense of energy. We haven't gotten to see too much of [Wally] just yet – Season Three will be an opportunity for us and the audience to really get to know that character more, but I think there's a lot to be mined."



After that jaw-dropping finale, nothing will be the same again. We look ahead at the reality-altering consequences...

THE FLASH

SEASON 3



Cast Grant Gustin, Candice Patton, Danielle Panabaker, Carlos Valdes, Tom Cavanagh, Jesse L Martin, Keiynan Lonsdale **Showrunners** Greg Berlanti, Andrew Kreisberg **UK** Sky1/October **US** The CW/4 October

OF ALL THE CW'S SHOWS, IT IS PERHAPS THE FLASH THAT CAN EXPECT THE MOST PRONOUNCED STATUS QUO CHANGE GOING INTO ITS THIRD SEASON.

The Season Two finale culminated in Barry Allen (Grant Gustin) finally removing the threat that was Zoom (Teddy Sears) from existence – at the tragic cost of his father, Henry (John Wesley Shipp). Something snapped, and he did what he'd held back from doing the same time of the previous year: went back and prevented his mother's murder at the hands of Eobard Thawne. In doing so he has changed history, and the ramifications will be enormous. After the unforgettable Season One finale, matching it was difficult task, but it more than succeeded in achieving this goal.

"When we got to Season Two that was an extremely tough act to follow," remembers Tom Cavanagh, who plays Earth-2's irascible, but ultimately distinctly not evil Harrison Wells. "One of the strongest images of Season One was when Barry went back to rescue his mother, and he was stayed by the hand of none other than he himself. It's certainly

well done in my view, because no words were spoken. Any time you can tell a story with that impact without using words, I feel like you've done a good job, and in Season Two we're back in the same place, and this time the man that stayed and looked on, he goes ahead, destroys Reverse-Flash's scheme and saves his mother. The anticipation of what that moment is and what it can possibly create offers the same kind of powerful season finale."

Another more shocking facet of Barry's decision was the fact that after two seasons worth of pining (from one or the other), he and Iris (Candice Patton) had seemingly agreed to make a go of things – only for Barry to go off and change the past. "The thing that we've seen about Iris over the past two seasons is she's incredibly supportive and loyal, so she would have been more understanding than Barry was maybe giving her credit for," says Patton. "I knew fans would be a little bit upset about Barry's decision, but I think it was a cliffhanger that would definitely make people want to come back for Season Three."

She has definitely got that right. While the changes to the timeline are likely to be stark, we have no doubt that at some point things will revert back to how they originally before. In the meantime, the possibilities are endless – one of the most appealing of which is the chance to see dead characters return to life and old favourites return. The cast have a few people in mind.



Tom Cavanagh remains tight-lipped about his role in Season Three.



Barry's hitting of the reset button will have adverse affects for him and Iris.



The core team will return for Season Three, with some changes.

THERE ARE A LOT OF ARCS IN THE COMICS FOR THE FLASH TO EXPERIENCE. AND WE'RE GOING TO HIT THE MAJOR ONES

TOM CAVANAGH

"For me, I'm a little biased - I would pick Eddie Thawne, played by Rick Cosnett, just because he's a friend and I miss him dearly, so that would be the one for me," says Patton.

"My first pitch is always, 'Well, what if Caitlin and Ronnie [Raymond, played by Robbie Amell] are happily married?'" says Danielle Panabaker, who successfully pulled off dual duty playing both Caitlin Snow and her dark Earth-2 alter-ego, Killer Frost. "So I would love to have him back - he feels like family on the show."

Speaking of doppelgangers, near enough every character in *The Flash* had one. Barry was the full-swing, ultra-nerdy scientist side we rarely see of Earth-1 Barry these days, Iris a hard-ass police officer, and Joe West (Jesse Martin) a

jazz singer - hell, even *Arrow*'s Floyd 'Deadshot' Lawton (played by Michael Rowe) made an appearance in a hilarious send-up of his alternate self. With Season Three likely offering even more opportunities for role reversals, this is something the cast are looking forward to. "I didn't even expect that I would get to play Killer Frost on Earth-2, so that was a real treat," recalls Panabaker.

"That's what was so fun about Season Two: really getting the opportunity to play a different character and go to that darker side. I can't wait to see what happens in Season Three and what it means for Caitlin and how much Barry has actually reset all of these different characters' lives."

And if that wasn't enough, Barry Allen himself, Grant Gustin, confirmed on Twitter that the third season would herald Geoff Johns' *Flashpoint* crossover as the main focus. While Cavanagh stops short of backing this up ("I don't want the Warner Bros snipers on my ass, and that's exactly what will happen!"), he does give a subtle hint: "There are a lot of arcs in the comic-book world for The Flash/Barry Allen to experience, and one thing I do know from the writers room is that we plan to hit all the major ones - that's got to be reassuring for the knowledgeable fan out there, and that's pretty much all I can say about that."

EARTH WARS

Team Flash versus their Earth-2 counterparts

EARTH-1

BARRY ALLEN

FIGHTING ABILITY	9
INTELLIGENCE	8
BRAVERY	10
MORAL FIBRE	10

VERDICT HE'S BASICALLY PERFECT. THE ULTIMATE CHEAT CARD.

EARTH-1

IRIS WEST

FIGHTING ABILITY	2
INTELLIGENCE	6
BRAVERY	7
MORAL FIBRE	9

VERDICT SMART AND BRAVE, YOU'D WANT HER CARD IN YOUR SET

EARTH-1

CISCO RAMON

FIGHTING ABILITY	3
INTELLIGENCE	9
BRAVERY	7
MORAL FIBRE	9

VERDICT SMART AND BRAVE, BUT HASKY REALISED HIS FULL POTENTIAL

EARTH-1

CAITLIN SNOW

FIGHTING ABILITY	2
INTELLIGENCE	9
BRAVERY	8
MORAL FIBRE	10

VERDICT IT'S A GOOD THING SHE DOESN'T HAVE A LUCK CATEGORY - IT WOULD BE ZERO.

EARTH-1

JOE WEST

FIGHTING ABILITY	7
INTELLIGENCE	7
BRAVERY	9
MORAL FIBRE	10

VERDICT BASICALLY THE SAME AS EARTH-2 JOE, ALTHOUGH WITH A MORE CHILLED SIDE.

EARTH-2

BARRY ALLEN

FIGHTING ABILITY	1
INTELLIGENCE	9
BRAVERY	3
MORAL FIBRE	8

VERDICT WE WOULDN'T FANCY HIS CHANCES AGAINST A PAPER BAG.

EARTH-2

IRIS WEST

FIGHTING ABILITY	5
INTELLIGENCE	7
BRAVERY	8
MORAL FIBRE	7

VERDICT HIS IF SHE'D FOLLOWED HER DREAMS, DON'T MESS WITH HER.

EARTH-2

CISCO RAMON

FIGHTING ABILITY	7
INTELLIGENCE	7
BRAVERY	6
MORAL FIBRE	2

VERDICT THE IMPERFECT MIX OF POWER AND SHEER IRRESPONSIBILITY

EARTH-2

CAITLIN SNOW

FIGHTING ABILITY	9
INTELLIGENCE	6
BRAVERY	7
MORAL FIBRE	4

VERDICT IT'S HARD TO PICTURE HOW CAITLIN COULD EVER BE BAD, BUT SHE MAKES IT EASIER.

EARTH-2

JOE WEST

FIGHTING ABILITY	3
INTELLIGENCE	7
BRAVERY	7
MORAL FIBRE	8

VERDICT HURRY BRILLIANT, BUT STILL, HURRY AH WELL, AS LONG AS HE'S HAPPY.



DC TV

SEASON 2

SUPERGIRL

Showrunner Ali Adler talks to us about what we can expect when Supergirl moves to The CW...

Cast Melissa Benoist, Chyler Leigh, David Harewood, Mehcad Brooks, Calista Flockhart

Showrunners Ali Adler, Greg Berlanti, Andrew Kreisberg **UK** Sky1/TBC **US** The CW/10 October

OF ALL THE SHOWS IN THIS LIST, SUPERGIRL IS THE ONE THAT WE'RE THE HAPPIEST TO BE ABLE TO INCLUDE, BECAUSE AT ONE POINT IT SEEMED AS IF there was a prospect of it ceasing to exist.

Although its ratings were decent by normal standards, they weren't exceptional by CBS's expectations, and aside from slight peaks during standout episodes 'For The Girl Who Has Everything' and *The Flash* crossover 'Worlds Finest', by the series finale it had lost over half its viewership. Rumours swum around of The CW – home to fellow Berlanti-brethren *Arrow*, *The Flash* and *Legends Of Tomorrow* – being interested in hosting it, but nothing was confirmed, and then CBS's fall schedule was announced, minus *Supergirl*.

Luckily, we weren't kept hanging on for too long. A few days later, it was confirmed that Season Two would see the show decamp to Vancouver as a paid-up part of The CW family, bringing with it all the rich potential for future crossovers. As happy as we are to see it still around, this clearly wasn't always the plan.

"It was as big a surprise to me as it was to you!" says co-executive producer and showrunner Ali Adler. "We really loved the idea of reaching out to a very large audience on CBS, and I think as we've started writing stories and finding that we were having so much fun in the world of aliens and superpowers and the tremendous visual effects that we have, it just became clear to us that we needed to explore our options on The CW."

One option would be to make more use of the supporting players. One of the strengths of the Berlanti-verse is the way in which it has made stars out of its ensembles – hell, *Legends Of Tomorrow*, an *entire show*, is composed of them. As perfect as Benoist is, her castmates don't always get the same focus; something that will change, with Adler promising that Alex (Chyler Leigh), Hank (David Harewood), Winn (Jeremy Jordan) and Jimmy – sorry *James* – (Mehcad Brooks) will all get their moments to shine.

"What's fun on The CW is that we're able



The crossover with *The Flash* was one of the best episodes.



Cheers to Supergirl heading to its new home on The CW. Hurrah!

“



YOU DON'T MESS WITH CAT GRANT

The best one/two-liners of the mighty media mogul

The Flash? Sounds like someone whose only superhero power is jumping out of an alley in a trench coat

Congratulations, you have the wit of a YouTube comment

Kiera, call Harrison Ford and tell him I'm flattered, but once and for all, I do not date older men, especially when they're married

I don't have an attitude problem; you have a perception problem

Tell that walking personification of white male privilege to come to my office

He was so unfailingly charming and nice that he had to be either a superhero or a Mormon

”



Season Two will see less of Kara as Supergirl and more of the supporting cast.



Alex and Hank will get more time to shine in the next season.

to explore a lot more of their personal lives, and really last year was the coming out of Kara; this season is everyone else coming into their own.

"With Mehcad [Brooks], we weren't looking for anyone specifically in that role; he just came in and won the part, he was the most talented person for the job, and we were so excited to re-imagine James Olsen in that way. Chyler [Leigh] was maybe cast last for the pilot, and we were just so thrilled by her; her acting is so incredible and layered. Jeremy [Jordan] is so much fun on set, and David Harewood is a Shakespearean-trained actor. We challenge him and he challenges us every day, it's a tremendous ensemble cast."

Its survival is a triumph for the fans. It won't face the same kind of ratings-related pressure it experienced on CBS, meaning that its survival is likely ensured for however long The CW wants to make it. If Adler has her way, that'll be a long time. "We keep surprising ourselves in the writers room, so the things we're discovering are very exciting. We hope to mirror some of the political events that are happening out there in these times of unrest: what if there was a Supergirl out there to help us all, and if we could all be a little Supergirl-ish the world would be better off, so it's that, there's new DC villains, it's her kicking ass and using her team."

THE NEW ADVENTURE OF SUPERMAN

The first word on Tyler Hoechlin's Kal-El

We'd always assumed that *Supergirl's* take on the Man of Steel was destined to remain a Charlie from *Charlie's Angels*-type figure: forever on the shadows, just out of reach or just missed. Luckily, the creators of the show seem to have realised that such storylines are utterly tedious – therefore, *Teen Wolf* star Tyler Hoechlin will be the latest live-action Superman, following in the footsteps of Christopher Reeve, Tom Welling, Brandon Routh, Henry Cavill et al. According to showrunner Ali Adler, it was the former who provided the most inspiration.

"[Tyler] has that light-heartedness that Christopher Reeve has, and we just love that – in the way that Melissa Benoist's Supergirl is so natural and relatable – so that was very alluring for us about Tyler. We really always gravitate towards that Christopher Reeve type because he's more relatable and more funny, and just more grounded."

Considering that The CW's shows have been limited in which characters they've been allowed to portray (the marginalisation/killing-off of the *Suicide Squad* characters post-movie announcement being a prime example), we asked Adler if she's ever felt limited in who they can take from the comic books. Reassuringly, the answer is a resounding no.

"I think that DC has been so generous and cooperative in terms of giving us the best of their heroes and villains... I mean, we can have Superman this season for the first couple of episodes, a huge historic event for us, and there's going to be other names that you will hear soon."



© Cage Skidmore



COVER FEATURE

DC TV

DC TV



Despite becoming mayor in the Season Four finale, Oliver has lost more than ever.

Diggle is another one who has seen his life left in turmoil.

ARROW SEASON 5

With Team Arrow in pieces, super sidekick Willa Holland reacts to that catastrophic finale...

Cast Stephen Amell, Emily Bett Rickards, David Ramsey, Willa Holland, Paul Blackthorne
Showrunners Greg Berlanti, Andrew Kreisberg, Marc Guggenheim, Wendy Mericle
UK Sky1/TBC **US** The CW/5 October

DON'T WANT ANYBODY TO GET TOO SCARED IN THAT MOST OF US KIND OF WALKED AWAY FROM STAR CITY – WE JUST NEEDED A LITTLE VACATION! I MAYBE NEEDED TO GO TO CORTO

Maltese, Hawaii or somewhere with a beach, and I feel Diggle and Lyla needed to do the same thing!" So says *Arrow*'s Willa Holland, aka Thea 'Speedy' Queen.

In the wake of the Season Four finale, you could be forgiven for worrying about the state of Team Arrow. Damien Darhk was put in the ground, but at the cost of Laurel's (Katie Cassidy) life. Furthermore, Diggle (David Ramsey), Thea (Willa Holland) and Quentin (Paul Blackthorne) also departed, leaving Oliver (Stephen Amell) and Felicity (Emily Bett Rickards) – who themselves are currently in a state of separation – to hold the fort.

Yet all is not lost. After all, we're talking about the fifth season, and with all the survivors confirmed to return, this isn't the end yet. Moreover, amid the gloom there's the welcome news that after sitting out for the majority of Season Four, Colton Haynes will return as Roy Harper – which Holland is clearly delighted about.

"When Colton's arc ended we were all like, 'What? Why are you going? Can you

please come back?' It was so great that he decided to come back for that one stint, and he's coming back for more – I just want to lock him in a box and keep him forever. If you don't see Colton for a while and he's not posting on Instagram, he's safe, he's fine – he's in my care!"

But it's not all going to be happy reunions. After the magic-infused previous season, the indication is that Season Five will return to the more visceral, in-your-face fight scenes the show was previously known for, with Amell taking to Facebook to call one such scuffle "the most vicious, violent one-shot in the history of network television."

In the meantime, Holland teases more developments for Thea while embracing the journey she has been on. "It's been amazing. My favourite thing about this show is being able to represent not only females as a whole, but the way that all the female characters are just so badass. I really have enjoyed turning a young girl who's damaged, a little crazy and full of herself in the beginning, to a real stand-up human being... and just going through all these real-life scenarios and growing up in her own right."

BROKEN ARROW

How we left the team after Season 4

OLIVER QUEEN

He's beaten Damien Darhk and become Star City's mayor, but the team has fractured and his relationship with Felicity ended. So swings and roundabouts really.

FELICITY SMOAK

Overwatch is sticking with Team Arrow, despite the awkwardness of having to work with her ex-other half. Well, whatever works.

JOHN DIGGLE

Wrestling with guilt over both killing his brother and not killing his brother sooner, Diggle has decided to avoid the carnage of Star City by, er, joining the army.

THEA QUEEN

Dealing with both Alex's death and her increasingly unstable powers, Thea has also left the city. Maybe she'll come back with Roy in tow?

QUENTIN LANCE

With one daughter dead and the other off with the Legends, he's decided that Star City life isn't for him, jetting off with Felicity's mum, Donna.



It's just Felicity left holding down the Team Arrow fort alongside Oliver.



4 LEGENDS OF TOMORROW

SEASON 2

Where next for The CW's trickiest show?



Cast Arthur Darvill, Brandon Routh, Caity Lotz, Dominic Purcell, Franz Drameh, Victor Garber, Maisie Richardson-Sellers, Nick Zano
Showrunners Greg Berlanti, Andrew Kreisberg, Marc Guggenheim, Phil Klemmer **UK** Sky1/TBC **US** The CW/13 October

WHERE DO YOU GO AFTER SAVING THE WORLD? THAT'S THE QUESTION FACING LEGENDS OF TOMORROW, WHICH HEADS INTO SEASON TWO

with its line-up shaken up. Gone are Wentworth Miller's Leonard Snart (to show up in *The Flash* in a recurring role) and the Hawks (Ciara Renée and Falk Hentschel), to be replaced by Maisie Richardson-Sellers (as a past incarnation of Vixen) and Nick Zano as Citizen Steel.

For Victor Garber, who plays Professor Martin Stein, one half of the meltdown-y Firestorm combo, the change is welcome. "I feel like we don't really get to the meat of things as much as I'd like to, so I'm hoping that changes in the next season. I'm not shy about saying I think we need to do this differently or better, or it's not really working this way."

Indeed, while we did enjoy the first season, it didn't quite hit the ground running

in the way that its predecessors have. Characterisation-wise, not everyone was on the same wavelength, and the initial timeline-of-the-week focus didn't play to everyone's strengths (for his part, Garber is "hoping there's more exploration of the psychology between the people in the team and how they all work together").

By the finale, however, things had greatly improved, which he acknowledges. "I thought we accomplished what we needed to. Stein's theory of being able to kill Savage in three different time periods was amazing, and I thought it was fun for the audience to experience that, and basically saying, 'The trouble's not over, and we're now going to embark on the next journey,' so I thought it was successful."

Following on, we will see the first on-screen introduction of the

Justice Society of America, as promised by fellow time traveller Rex Tyler (Patrick J Adams), who warns them not to board the Waverider due to the small matter of their impending deaths.

Closing off, Garber indicates that things will pick up where they left off. "They're writing furiously as we speak, but I can tell you that there will be more focus on the interaction of the group, that's what I'm hearing, but that's all I'm hearing – I really don't know anything else!"

THERE WILL BE MORE FOCUS ON THE INTERACTION OF THE GROUP – I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ELSE!
VICTOR GARBER

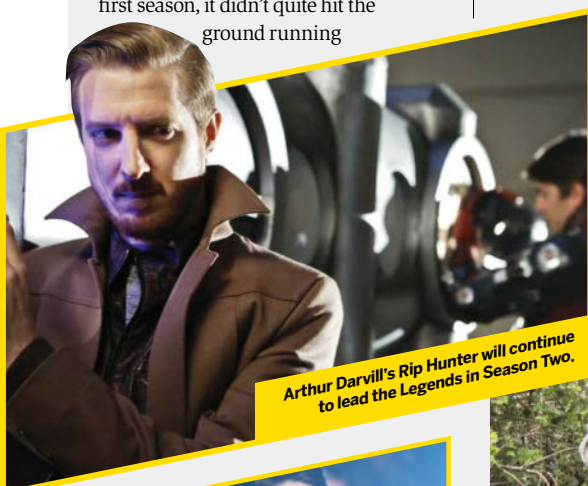
INTRODUCING... THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA!

A bluffer's guide to DC's first super-team

The history of the DC universe can be tricky to navigate for the comics novice at the best of times, what with the numerous reboots and reality-warping line-wide crossovers that have taken place – and no team best exemplifies this than the Justice Society of America.

Having first been established in the Forties, the team comprised early versions of characters like Green Lantern, Hawkman and The Flash (indeed, Season Two lifted the look of Jay Garrick's Scarlet Speedster from this incarnation). After their series was cancelled and the modern-day team took up the torch, they were established as the Earth-2 counterparts to Earth-1's Justice League.

In 1985, the *Crisis On Infinite Earths* crossover event merged the two, with the JSA's team having been in action during the events of World War II. As of the New 52, the two teams appear to have reverted to their former status quo, with the JSA existing in the various Earth-2 series. Whoever said comics were complicated...



Arthur Darvill's Rip Hunter will continue to lead the Legends in Season Two.



Victor Garber has more development for Firestorm on his wish list.



Sara 'White Canary' Lance, Ray 'The Atom' Palmer and Mick 'Heatwave' Rory are among the survivors.



DC TV

GOTHAM

SEASON 3

Cast Ben McKenzie, Donal Logue, David Mazouz, Erin Richards, Sean Pertwee, Robin Lord Taylor, Camren Bicondova, Cory Michael Smith, Jada Pinkett Smith **Showrunners** Bruno Heller, John Stephens, Danny Cannon **UK** Channel 5/TBC **US** Fox/19 September

5 things to look out for in Gotham Season 3

New villains

There's no shortage of villains for *Gotham* to use, and Mad Hatter is the latest big addition. Sean Pertwee, who plays Alfred, is particularly excited about his arrival, seeing it as "a very emotive aspect, especially for Bruce and myself, because of course, Martha Wayne used to read *Alice In Wonderland* to him all the time."

But he's not the only new villain in town – we've also got the Court of Owls coming up. "There will be a form of confrontation there," Pertwee promises us. "For the last two seasons Bruce has desperately been looking for the murderer of his parents, and he suddenly realises... it was the Court of Owls."

And of course there's the Bruce Wayne doppelganger, but everyone's keeping very quiet about him...

The return of some familiar faces

Fish Mooney (Jada Pinkett Smith) returned at the end of Season Two with the new ability to control people's minds with a touch. "She is obviously going to be the primary focus of Oswald's," says Robin Lord Taylor, who plays the future Penguin. "She's going to be the major conflict in his life in Season Three. I've said it before, but he'll just have to find a taller building to throw her off."

But even if Penguin's not happy to see Fish back, Taylor is. "[Jada] brings so much colour and energy to our show. We are all so excited to have her back."



What will Season Three have in store for Alfred, Jim Gordon and Harvey Bullock?

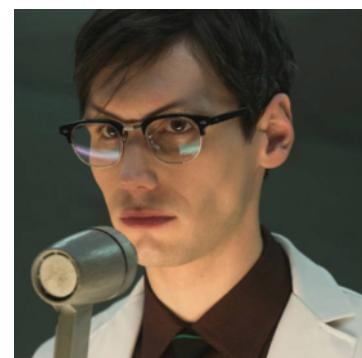
More Penguin and Riddler than you can shake a stick at

The pairing of Penguin and Edward Nygma (Cory Michael Smith) was a big hit in Season Two, and there's more to come. "It's quite great," says Smith, "Because [Penguin]'s such a dark soul. Not that he doesn't have fun, because he does, but there's a lovely thing with Ed's giddiness, dancing around Oswald, that's really fun."

"Being an origin story, we're setting the ground work for what comes later," Robin Lord Taylor says, "and then to know that at one point Penguin and Riddler were friends and were close, I think that's incredibly exciting."

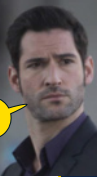


Despite being thrown from a roof in Season One, Fish Mooney is back!



"ALL OF OUR CHARACTERS' LIVES ARE GOING TO INTERTWINE"

ROBIN LORD TAYLOR



Bruce finally knows who is responsible for the death of his parents.



Alfred and Bruce are going to be stronger than ever

Alfred has had a tough introduction to parenthood, often getting things wrong with Bruce and driving him away. But Sean Pertwee reckons that this will change in Season Three.

"What a bizarre relationship they have," he says. "I mean, it's dysfunctional, which implies something doesn't work, but it *does* work, and there is a paternal aspect starting to creep in through the darkness." He thinks we'll see a "coming together of young Master Bruce and Alfred in this season."

Some exciting new alliances

Robin Lord Taylor hopes that the arrival of the Indian Hill monsters in Gotham will force some unlikely characters to team up.

"I'm hoping that previous conflicts between characters will have to be put aside, because we all have to join together to rid Gotham of these monsters," he says.

"That's what's so exciting about the show going forward," Taylor adds, "is that our characters' lives are all going to intertwine, and alliances are going to be made and then broken."



6 LUCIFER SEASON 2

Tom Ellis tells us what satanic shenanigans to expect

Cast Tom Ellis, Lauren German, DB Woodside, Lesley-Ann Brandt, Rachael Harris
Showrunner Joe Henderson **UK** Amazon/TBC **US** Fox/19 September

SciFiNow: Can you tell us about where the show is going in Season Two?

Tom Ellis: The introduction of Mum and the notion that she's escaped from Hell is going to be our big overriding storyline in Season Two. Who is Mum, and what does she represent? I believe that there will be a new dynamic brought into the show, because we haven't really seen Lucifer scared of anything yet, and I think the idea of his mum being out is quite ominous for him. We're going to find out why. And basically it will help us explore the subject of family, which is always a great thing to explore.

Speaking of family, it looks like Amenadiel will be going darker.

I think Lucifer quite enjoys watching these things come out of his brother, because it flags up a certain hypocrisy, and if there's one thing that Lucifer doesn't like it's a hypocrite. I don't know where the writers are actually going to go with the Amenadiel character, but the sibling rivalry that they have is something that DB [Woodside] – who plays

Amenadiel – and I have talked about a lot. We try and ground it as much as possible in the show: the fact that these guys grew up together and they are real brothers.

They bring out the worst in each other.

Oh they do, yeah. But I love that relationship, I think it's really fun to play... It ties in with that same thing that we've said from the start... that maybe people should take responsibility for their own actions rather than palming it off to some mythical ether.

Lucifer talks a lot about how he's the devil, but he never proves it to them. Is he starting to actually quite like being seen as a human?

It doesn't really matter to him whether they believe him or not. In fact, he probably finds it quite funny when people don't get it. But I think the first person we might find who gets a bit more of the devil side might be Dr Linda in Season Two, because she's still intent on embracing this metaphor, and I think Lucifer might actually snap about that.

Is it a challenge to play a 'devil with a soul' without losing sight of the danger?

I like to think of him a little bit as a wild animal that we think is being tamed. But at any moment with a wild animal there's always a Siegfried and Roy moment around the corner. It's important for me, approaching it; I have to constantly remember that he's the Devil. While he's still undergoing this change and all these things that are happening to him, there's still a go-to point for him that he's not really in control of.

Do you think he'll ever lose that nature?

To be honest, I think it would be difficult for him to shed that.



Season Two will see Lucifer hold on to his inner Devil.

DC TV

SEASON 3

iZOMBIE

Post-Netflix binge watch, we gear up for the game-changing third season

Cast Rose McIver, Rahul Kohli, Malcolm Goodwin, Robert Buckley, David Anders
Showrunners Rob Thomas, Diane Ruggiero-Wright **UK** Netflix/TBC **US** CW/TBC

IT TOOK NEARLY TWO YEARS, BUT WE FINALLY HAVE ROB THOMAS AND DIANE RUGGIERO-WRIGHT'S (BOTH OF VERONICA MARS FAME) GENIUS UNDEAD CRIME COMEDY IZOMBIE IN THE UK. THANK YOU, NETFLIX. WE'LL NEVER FORGET THIS.

But after we all binge-watched the entire thing over Easter weekend, it left us with quite the cliffhanger. Now that Major, Peyton and Babineaux are all in on Liv's zombie secret, and it looks like an undead uprising is on the cards for Seattle, where can the show go from here?

"One of the things that we're really, really excited about is that all of our main characters are now in the know," Ruggiero-Wright tells us. "We're very excited... everyone is on the same playing field, and everyone knows what's happening and how that affects our story moving forward."

Season Two closed with a new player changing the game. After saving Liv and her friends from a horde that had gone into 'full-on zombie mode', Vivian Stoll announced that Seattle was becoming the new zombie homeland. But who exactly is she, and why should we believe her?

"[Vivian] is the head of this military, private contractor, black water-esque company called Fillmore Graves," says Ruggiero-Wright. "This Fillmore Graves organisation believes that people are going to find out about it soon, and the zombies that are already living in Seattle need to be ready. That's kind of what we deal with in our third season."

It sounds like things are going to be in 'full-on zombie mode' for a while. However, Ruggiero-Wright assures us that one of the show's greatest assets will still be there to keep things light. "I think until everybody is out, and everything is completely out with everyone in the world, we will still have cases of the week," she says. "I personally love the case of the week, but sometimes I worry that I'm alone in that. I love her on the different brains, and I love that coming into play with the rest of the story. Not only is she solving the case of the week on that brain, she also has to fight the zombie fight on that brain. I enjoy that."

The show's other greatest asset is, of course, the brilliant Rose McIver, who plays a new version of Liv every episode, depending on whose brain she's been eating. "She is amazing," says Ruggiero-Wright. "I could not love that girl more. I'm so glad I didn't go to high school with her because she would have been the bane of my existence. She's just so good at everything. It would have just been torture. We have this episode where she had to do a magic trick and had to learn to shuffle the cards a certain way, and she learnt it in 15 minutes. She picked it up while driving to work! It's ridiculous! I watched her learn Romanian for the Pilot. I watched her learn it! The coach came in, he worked with her for a little bit, and I watched her practicing it. And bam! It was amazing. I don't know, I think she might be a robot."

UK viewers have finally caught up with their Transatlantic counterparts.

Rose McIver has been a revelation as Olivia 'Liv' Moore.

Every episode sees Liv take on a whole new personality.

The showrunners tease exciting times ahead for Season Three.

"I'M SO GLAD I DIDN'T GO TO HIGH SCHOOL WITH HER... SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN THE BANE OF MY EXISTENCE"

DIANE RUGGIERO-WRIGHT

8 KRYPTON

Cast TBC **Showrunners** David S Goyer, Damian Kindler **UK** TBC/TBC **US** Syfy/TBC

AFTER A YEAR AND A HALF OF DEVELOPMENT, SYFY IS FINALLY VENTURING OUT TO SUPERMAN'S HOME

planet in its upcoming series *Krypton*. However, the show won't feature the Man of Steel himself; instead, it will focus on the life of his father, Jor-El, and his fight to redeem his family's honour and save Krypton from spiralling into chaos. *The Girl With All The Gifts* director Colm McCarthy is already on board to direct the pilot episode, and *Sleepy Hollow*'s Damian Kindler is acting as executive producer.





SEASON 4

9 AGENTS OF SHIELD

The cast and crew on the future of SHIELD and no happy endings

Cast Clark Gregg, Ming-Na Wen, Chloe Bennet, Elizabeth Henstridge, Iain De Caestecker **Showrunners** Jed Whedon, Maurissa Tanchareon, Jeffrey Bell **UK** E4/TBC **US** ABC/20 September

WHAT A SEASON AGENTS OF SHIELD HAS HAD. IT SEEMS STRANGE THAT IT WAS CONSTANTLY ACCUSED OF BEING BORING during its first season when the action now doesn't seem to stop.

But with everything that's happened over the last 22 episodes – Grant Ward becoming Hive, Jemma Simmons (Henstridge) being trapped on a desolate planet, Daisy (Bennet) having her mind controlled – there is one

thing in particular that we all definitely need to talk about: FitzSimmons finally got together.

"I'm happy that they got together and I hope they can stay happy," Henstridge told us. "But you know... It's *Agents Of SHIELD*; nothing stays good for very long." Oh god.

Even if FitzSimmons *aren't* together forever, there's still a lot going on to keep us occupied. Daisy is on the run after Lincoln's death in the series

finale, and SHIELD needs a new director. Thankfully, co-showrunner Maurissa Tanchareon has confirmed that Coulson's replacement will be revealed early on in the new season.

Clark Gregg has his money on Agent May (Wen) talking the wheel. "I'd love it if it was her," he told EW. "That would be magnificent. She has earned that right and she is a commander that Coulson would absolutely follow with absolute loyalty."

SPIN-OFF CENTRAL

Shows we'd like to see replace Marvel's Most Wanted



MARVEL'S THE COLLEGE YEARS

A 40-minute comedy drama à la *Gilmore Girls*, but it's about FitzSimmons' time in college. The ongoing will they/ won't they story keeps us on the edge of our seats.



MARVEL'S TRANSPORT WARS

A documentary-style show that gives us a look at Coulson on his days off; he travels the US and attends vehicle auctions. He bankrupts SHIELD by the end of Season One.



MARVEL'S WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Daisy meets a new Inhuman each week to help them figure out what their powers are. Every episode ends with the contestant getting locked in a secure container.

10 LEGION

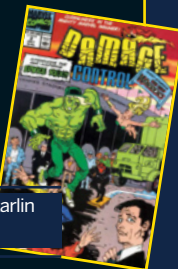


Cast Dan Stevens, Rachel Keller, Jean Smart, Aubrey Plaza **Showrunner** Noah Hawley **UK** FOX/TBC **US** FX/Early 2017

WE'RE QUITE EXCITED FOR THIS ONE. ACTUALLY, NOT QUITE; VERY. FIRST OFF, IT'S GOT FARGO'S

Noah Hawley as a showrunner. Secondly, it has Dan Stevens (*The Guest*) in a gritty role. He stars as David Haller, a haunted man who was diagnosed with schizophrenia at a young age, and is looking for a way back to reality. We're sure he's going to knock it out of the park. Thirdly, it's *X-Men*. Then there's all the *Breaking Bad* comparisons, which can't be a bad thing.

11 DAMAGE CONTROL



Cast TBC **Showrunner** Ben Karlin **UK** TBC/TBC **US** ABC/TBC

MARVEL TELEVISION'S FIRST COMEDY COMES IN THE FORM OF DAMAGE CONTROL, A SHOW

about a cleaning crew that deal with the mess left by superhero-related conflicts. No job is too big or too small, it seems, as the team's unique skillset range from returning lost gadgets to their rightful owners to rescheduling events after their venues fall victim to boss battles. It still seems quite far off though, as it doesn't even have a cast yet.

12 HELLFIRE

Cast TBC **Showrunners** Patrick McKay, JD Payne **UK** TBC/TBC **US** TBC/TBC

ANOTHER MARVEL SERIES! WE JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF X-MEN THIS YEAR. SET IN

the Sixties, *Hellfire* centres on a young special agent who accidentally uncovers a secret society of people with unexplainable abilities who want to take over the world. The show will be the product of a collaboration between 20th Century Fox and Marvel Television, and all the usual bigwigs like Bryan Singer and Jeph Loeb are involved.





COVER FEATURE

Netflix

NETFLIX HEROES



13 LUKE CAGE

Cast Mike Colter, Mahershala Ali, Alfre Woodard, Simone Missick, Theo Rossi **Showrunner** Cheo Hodari Coker
UK Netflix/30 September **US** Netflix/30 September

Sweet Christmas, our favourite unbreakable Harlem man is finally back!

After both getting to know and falling in love with Luke Cage in *Jessica Jones*, we're excited to watch him slay in his own series. A cast of new characters and the need to confront his past ought to keep things deliciously gritty.



MARIAH DILLARD (ALFRE WOODARD)

As both Stokes' cousin and a local politician, Dillard is looking to make change while also keeping her reputation intact.



CORNELL 'COTTONMOUTH' STOKES (MAHERSHALA ALI)

The shady owner of a Harlem nightclub, Stokes is sure to stir up trouble. Ali describes him as a 'Godfather'-type villain.



LUKE CAGE (MIKE COLTER)

The series takes place a few months after *Jessica Jones*, with Luke in Harlem trying to make ends meet. He's a fugitive with a lot of skeletons in his closet.

DEFENDERS ASSEMBLE!

The long road to Netflix's answer to the Avengers



MISTY KNIGHT (SIMONE MISSICK)

Harlem police officer Knight is determined to learn more about Cage and his powers after getting caught up in his chaotic world.



CLAIRE TEMPLE (ROSARIO DAWSON)

Dawson brings much of the Netflix universe together, having reprised her *Daredevil* role in *Jessica Jones* and the upcoming *Luke Cage*.

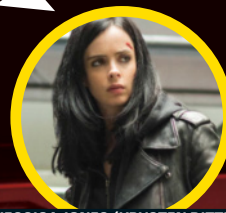


SEASON 2

15 JESSICA JONES

Cast Krysten Ritter, Rachael Taylor, Eka Darville, Carrie-Anne Moss **Showrunner** Melissa Rosenberg
UK Netflix/TBC **US** Netflix/TBC

From the very first episode to the finale 13 hours later (we know you binge-watched it too), *Jessica Jones* was a continuous hit. But we have a feeling that the drama is only just getting started. After the awful Kilgrave's demise, we're eager to see what kinds of bastards Jones will be tackling next.



JESSICA JONES (KRYSTEN RITTER)

Jessica spent pretty much the whole of Season One setting the bar for complexity and characterisation in on-screen superhero stories.



14 THE PUNISHER

Cast Jon Bernthal **Showrunner** Steve Lightfoot
UK Netflix/TBC **US** Netflix/TBC

Described as a standalone series, Frank Castle's solo debut ought to tie the loose ends left by *Daredevil*'s second season. This series wasn't included in Netflix's initial plan for their collection of Defenders stories, but the Punisher is just too darn good to pass the opportunity of exploring further.



FRANK CASTLE (JON BERNTHAL)

The armed vigilante will be explored further in his own series, but there's no news yet as to whether he'll appear in *The Defenders*.



TRISH WALKER (RACHAEL TAYLOR)

Jessica Jones wouldn't be Jessica Jones without Trish Walker by her side. Her presence in Season Two hasn't been confirmed yet, but c'mon!



NETFLIX REVISITED

18 SENSE8 SEASON 2

Cast Miguel Ángel Silvestre, Tuppence Middleton, Doona Bae, Jamie Clayton, Brian J Smith, Tina Desai, Max Riemelt
Showrunners The Wachowskis, J Michael Straczynski
UK Netflix/December 2016 **US** Netflix/December 2016

SENSE8'S PREMISE IS COMPLEX AND AT TIMES NONSENSICAL, BUT ITS IMPRESSIVE AND SURPRISING FIRST season effortlessly managed to keep us hooked from start to finish. It was funny, it was badass, and it was emotional – in short, everything you could possibly want from a sci-fi thriller. And from what we've heard about Season Two, things are about to get a whole lot bigger; the Sensates have even more menacing threats to fight, the already huge cast has accumulated some new faces, and the list of worldwide filming locations just doesn't seem to end.



19 BLACK MIRROR SEASON 3

Cast Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Mackenzie Davis, Bryce Dallas Howard, Alice Eve, Malachi Kirby **Showrunners** Charlie Brooker, Annabel Jones **UK** Netflix/TBC **US** Netflix/TBC

EVER SINCE NETFLIX OUTBID CHANNEL 4 FOR BLACK MIRROR'S UK BROADCASTING RIGHTS, IT HAS become extremely hard for us to contain our joy at the fact that Season Three will have more episodes than those in Series One, Series Two and the 2014 Special put together. 12 whole episodes of *Black Mirror* magic! Creator Charlie Brooker is still around to executive produce and write the script, and there is also a long list of some pretty sweet directors – Joe Wright for one – involved.



20 ALTERED CARBON

Cast Joel Kinnaman **Showrunner** Laeta Kalogridis
UK Netflix/TBC **US** Netflix/TBC

NOT A LOT IS KNOWN ABOUT THIS ONE JUST YET – NETFLIX HAS A STRANGE TENDENCY TO KEEP EVERYTHING SURROUNDING THEIR new shows hush-hush before bombarding everyone with info and gifs at the last moment – but it's based on the cyberpunk novel of the same name by Richard K Morgan, and it's got Joel Kinnaman (*Suicide Squad*) in it. Morgan's novel explores a dystopian, futuristic world in which human personalities can be stored digitally and downloaded into new bodies. As you would imagine, that way of doing things is complicated and highly flawed, and so things start to go very wrong.



16 IRON FIST

Cast Finn Jones, Jessica Henwick, David Wenham
Showrunner Scott Buck **UK** Netflix/TBC
US Netflix/TBC

The last member of the Defenders is boss-level martial artist Danny Rand, more commonly known as Iron Fist. *Game Of Thrones'* Finn Jones won the role in February, and filming commenced in New York City in April. The likes of Jessica Henwick, David Wenham and Tom Pelphrey make up the rest of the cast.



HAROLD MEACHUM
(DAVID WENHAM)

There'll be a lot of family drama for Rand when ruthless corporate leader Meachum – who was Rand's dead parents' partner – arrives on the scene.



COLEEN WING (JESSICA HENWICK)

In the comics, master samurai Wing formed partnerships with Misty Knight, Luke Cage and Iron Fist. She'll likely become Rand's love interest in the series.



JERI HOGARTH
(CARRIE-ANNE MOSS)

Though she's not actually a villain, Jeri's messed-up way of thinking provided a lot of drama in *Jessica Jones*. Now she's bringing that drama to *Iron Fist*.



DANNY RAND (FINN JONES)

As a billionaire Buddhist monk and kung-fu artist with the ability to call upon the power of the Iron Fist, Rand has got his work cut out for him.



17 THE DEFENDERS

Cast Charlie Cox, Krysten Ritter, Mike Colter, Finn Jones
Showrunners Douglas Petrie, Marco Ramirez
UK Netflix/TBC **US** Netflix/TBC

Matt Murdock, Jessica Jones, Luke Cage and Danny Rand will join forces as The Defenders for a whole season of probably non-stop drama, action, butt-kicking and falling-outs. Not much is known about it so far except for the fact that it's due to start filming towards the end of 2016.



MATT MURDOCK (CHARLIE COX)

The Man Without Fear will return for *The Defenders* – it all started with him, after all – but how have the events of *Daredevil* changed him?



COVER FEATURE

British Sci-Fi

BRITISH SCI-FI

21 CLASS

Cast Greg Austin, Fady Elsayed, Sophie Hopkins, Vivian Oparah, Katherine Kelly
Showrunner Patrick Ness **UK** BBC Three/2016 **US** BBC America/2016

DOCTOR WHO MAY BE ON A BREAK, BUT ITS SPIN-OFF SHOW, CLASS, IS GETTING READY FOR ITS FIRST LESSON. LEAVING THE TARDIS BEHIND, CLASS IS HEADING TO COAL MILL ACADEMY TO CATCH UP WITH THE SIXTH FORMERS AS they stress over friends, parents, schoolwork, sex, time travel and monsters.

Inevitably, things are going to be a little different to what we've used to from *Doctor Who*; *Class* is set to be more of a teen drama series with sci-fi elements thrown into the mix, and will air UK-exclusively online for BBC Three. It's also being written by Patrick Ness, the author of the brilliant *A Monster Calls*, so whatever happens it will likely be excellent. In addition to his writing duties, Ness will serve as executive producer alongside Brian Minchin and outgoing *Who* showrunner Steven Moffat.

Class is also looking great in terms of diversity and representation. Not only is the cast made up of actors of different racial backgrounds, but the show is set to have an LGBTQ lead character. Taking to Twitter, Ness said: "Been asked if *Class* will have LGBT representation in it. Will a lead character with a boyfriend who he kisses and sleeps with and loves do?" Go Ness!

GREG AUSTIN

Austin is relatively new to the TV scene, having first appeared in an episode of *Law & Order: UK* in 2014, but you might recognise him as *Mr Selfridge* regular Gordon.

VIVIAN OPARAH

Class is Oparah's first TV or film credit, but she was a member of the National Youth Theatre, the company that helped launch the careers of Daniel Craig, Felicity Jones and more.

WHO'S WHO?

Introducing the roster of *Class*

22 DOCTOR WHO

SERIES 10

Cast Peter Capaldi, Pearl Mackie **Showrunner** Steven Moffat
UK BBC One/Spring 2017 **US** BBC America/2017

SERIES TEN IS GOING TO BE A SPECIAL SERIES FOR A COUPLE OF REASONS. FIRSTLY, AFTER CLARA'S EXIT IN SERIES

Nine, we're going to get to meet a new companion. This one is called Bill, and she is being played by stage actress Pearl Mackie. Secondly, this will be Steven Moffat's last turn as showrunner, with him bowing out after seven years. We're sure he'll go out with a bang – and probably an overly complicated time paradox.



23 HUMANS

SERIES 2

Cast Colin Morgan, Gemma Chan, Katherine Parkinson, Emily Berrington, Tom Goodman-Hill
Showrunners Sam Vincent, Jonathan Brackley **UK** Channel 4/TBC **US** AMC/TBC

IF ANY (PARTLY) BRITISH-MADE SHOW FROM LAST YEAR DESERVED ANOTHER SERIES, IT'S HUMANS. IT NEVER FAILED TO HAVE OUR hearts racing with its combo of classic sci-fi and interrogation of moral quandaries, and things are getting even bigger for Series Two. It's picking up a couple of months from the end of Series One, and in its downtime has acquired Carrie-Anne Moss (*The Matrix*) as pre-eminent AI expert Dr Athena Morrow, Nashville's Sam Palladio as a struggling café owner and Marshall Allman (*Prison Break*) as a Silicon Valley billionaire.





SOPHIE HOPKINS
Until now, all of Hopkins' TV credits have been for documentary series. However, she has also starred in a fair few short films, including *Dead Gigolo* and *The Meeting Place*.

FADY ELSAYED
Elsayed made his screen debut in 2012 drama *My Brother The Devil*, and has since appeared in the likes of *Penny Dreadful*, *Silent Witness* and *The Aliens*.

KATHERINE KELLY
Kelly will a Coal Hill teacher, and possibly a real-life mentor to the younger cast. She's a TV regular, having had major roles in *Mr Selfridge*, *Coronation Street* and *Happy Valley*.

“WILL A LEAD CHARACTER WITH A BOYFRIEND WHO HE KISSES AND SLEEPS WITH AND LOVES DO?”
PATRICK NESS

24 CRAZY FACE

Cast Cara Theobald, Susan Wokoma, Riann Steele, Lewis Reeves, Arinze Kene, Tony Curran
Showrunner Howard Overman **UK** E4/TBC **US** Netflix/TBC

AFTER THE SUCCESS OF HOWARD OVERMAN'S MISFITS, E4 IS LOOKING TO RECREATE ITS MAGIC (AND MADNESS) in its new show, *Crazy Face*. As another product of Overman's bizarre imagination, this comedy-horror tells the story of Amy (Cara Theobald), a young woman who finds out one day that she can see demons. Deciding to take a stand against the underworld, she teams up with the enigmatic Raquel (Susan Wokoma), who has been hunting demons from a young age, and together they attempt to rid the world of invisible evil.

"It is not just fighting demons for fun," says Theobald. "It's to save the people that you love, and to save your world. [It] exists in this little bubble removed from the rest of the world in this unlikely gang of demon hunters, who are trying to look after what they hold dear."

Joining Theobald and Wokoma are Riann Steele as Suzanne, Amy's childhood friend, Arinze Kene as Tyler, Raquel's brother, Lewis Reeves as Jake, Amy's colleague, who is sort of obsessed with her, and Tony Curran as Callum, who's just a really bad dude.



BRITISH SCI-FI

50 Must-See TV Shows

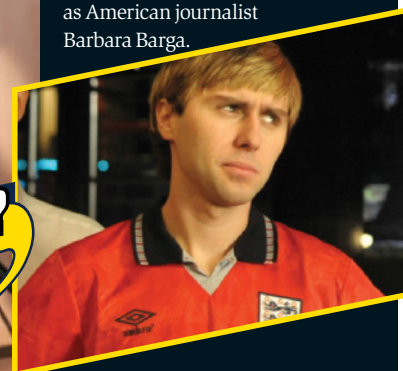


© Manfred Werner - Tsui

25 SS-GB

Cast Sam Riley, Kate Bosworth
Showrunners Sally Woodward Gentle, Lee Morris
UK BBC/TBC **US** BBC/TBC

BASED ON LEN DEIGHTON'S NOVEL, *SS-GB* – WHICH IS BASICALLY THE BRITISH VERSION OF THE MAN IN *The High Castle* – imagines what the UK would be like if Germany had won WW2. It's a miniseries, with only five episodes planned, having been adapted by *Spectre* screenwriters Neal Purvis and Robert Wade. The cast includes *Maleficent*'s Sam Riley starring as Detective Superintendent Douglas Archer and Kate Bosworth as American journalist Barbara Barga.



26 ZAPPED!

Cast James Buckley, Paul Kaye, Sharon Rooney
Showrunners Dan Gaster, Will Ing, Paul Powell
UK Dave/TBC **US** TBC/TBC

JAMES BUCKLEY OF *INBETWEENERS* FAME HEADLINES CHANNEL DAVE'S FANTASY COMEDY ZAPPED!, AS

Brian Weaver, an online data marketing assistant who ventures into a maze of parallel worlds and other dimensions by accident. Steve Coogan is on board as executive producer, while Paul Kaye (*Pulling*), Louis Emerick (*Last Of The Summer Wine*), Sharon Rooney (*My Mad Fat Diary*) and Ken Collard (*Cuckoo*) are a wizard, former-warrior pub owner, soothsayer and 'armchair revolutionary' respectively.



COVER FEATURE

Adult Sci-Fi

ADULT SCI-FI

27 WESTWORLD

Cast Anthony Hopkins, Ed Harris, Evan Rachel Wood, James Marsden, Thandie Newton, Jeffrey Wright, Tessa Thompson **Showrunners** Jonathan Nolan, Lisa Joy **UK** HBO/October TBC **US** Sky Atlantic/October TBC

HBO HAS TAUGHT US SOMETHING ABOUT THE ART OF DELAYED GRATIFICATION WHEN IT COMES TO WESTWORLD, FINALLY GIVING US A HALFWAY DECENT LOOK AT THE SHOW WITH A JAW-DROPPING PREVIEW. ONE THING HAS BEEN MADE VERY

clear: this is a new *Westworld* for a new generation.

Michael Crichton's original film was as much an action thriller as it was a cautionary tale, but Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy's reimagining is looking several shades darker.

We've been spoiled recently when it comes to breakdowns of our relationship with AI, from *Ex Machina* to Channel 4's *Humans*, but the images of frozen humanesque forms left discarded are still decidedly chilling, and Evan Rachel Wood looks to be the perfect choice as Dolores Abernathy, a young woman who realises that the world she lives in is a lie.

We also get a look at *Westworld*'s customers, played by Jimmi Simpson (*It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia*) and Ben Barnes (*Prince Caspian*), and it looks like they'll be taking some rough with the smooth.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, Jeffrey Wright and Anthony Hopkins confront a situation that is "miles beyond a glitch," as an android tells the park owner that his drive is to "meet my maker", before letting out an unsettling cackle. Which is extremely damn eerie.

There had been reports of work halting on the show to allow further writing to take place, as Nolan explained that the production simply required more work than expected. Looking at the trailers, it seems like that time was well spent, with stunning sets and sweeping Western landscapes. If this can deliver the gut-punch shocks to go with its cerebral questions then it should be very special.



"IF THIS CAN DELIVER THEN IT SHOULD BE VERY SPECIAL"



28 AMERICAN GODS

Cast Ricky Whittle, Ian McShane, Emily Browning, Gillian Anderson, Orlando Jones, Pablo Schreiber, Crispin Glover, Peter Stormare, Jonathan Tucker, Cloris Leachman **Showrunners** Bryan Fuller, Michael Green **UK** TBC/Early 2017 **US** Starz/Early 2017

THE LAST MONTH HAS GIVEN US A SEEMINGLY NEVER-ENDING STREAM OF CASTING ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR BRYAN

Fuller and Michael Green's adaptation of Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*, and they've all been amazing. *Sleepy Hollow*'s Orlando Jones and *Hannibal*'s Demore Barnes have joined as Mr Nancy and Mr Ibis respectively, while *Better Call Saul* star Omid Abtahi has been cast as Salim.

Sadly, Sean Harris had to drop out of playing Mad Sweeney for personal

reasons, but Pablo Schreiber (*Orange Is The New Black*) is a fine replacement, and we're thrilled that Gillian Anderson will be playing the new god Media.

We also love the fact that Fuller and co chose the Jack's Crocodile Bar fight between Shadow and Mad Sweeney for the first-look pictures. It's big, it's colourful, and it's loud. *American Gods* gets pretty damn dark, but this is a whole fantastical world that we can look forward to getting lost in.



CLASH OF CASTS

Ranking the casts of the best new shows in silverware



AMERICAN GODS



WESTWORLD



TWIN PEAKS



29 STAR TREK

Cast TBC **Showrunner** Bryan Fuller **UK** Unknown/Unknown **US** CBS/January 2017

AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF SILENCE, BRYAN FULLER FINALLY DROPPED SOME DETAILS ABOUT HIS STAR TREK REVIVAL SERIES – not many admittedly, but enough to get us salivating. Although we're going to have to wait until Comic-Con to get any casting or directing revelations, Fuller told *Collider* that the show would be made up of 13 episodes telling a single story, as opposed to a mission of the week. As he pointed out, with 50 years of stories coming before it, this creative team will

have its work cut out when it comes to finding a new way to tell the voyages of the USS Enterprise.

And because Fuller is one of the good ones, *Star Trek* 2017's casting will be race- and gender-blind, and may very well feature LGBTQ characters. "We want to carry on what *Star Trek* does best, which is being progressive," Fuller told *Collider*. "I think the progressive audience that loves *Star Trek* will be happy that we're continuing that tradition." Bring it on.



30 THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE SEASON 2

Cast Rufus Sewell, Alexa Davalos, Rupert Evans, Luke Kleintank, Joel de la Fuente, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa
Showrunner TBC **UK** Amazon/Late 2016 **US** Amazon/Late 2016



THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE HAS BEEN ONE OF AMAZON'S REAL SUCCESS STORIES, AND A WELCOME EXAMPLE OF A PHILIP K Dick novel being given the treatment it deserves. However, despite very strong ratings and rave reviews, things got a wee bit rocky around the start of Season Two's production, as showrunner Frank Spotnitz stepped away from the show. There have been the usual 'creative differences' rumblings, but he's still on board as an executive producer, and

production is now back on track for a probable end-of-year release.

Plot-wise, details are thin on the ground, but Spotnitz hinted at broadening the scope to make it more global. We also know that *The Neon Demon* star Bella Heathcote has been cast as a young filmmaker who meets Luke Kleintank's Joe in Berlin, and Sebastian Roche (*Supernatural*, *The Vampire Diaries* – every damn TV show, in fact) will be playing Joe's estranged father.

31 TWIN PEAKS SEASON 3

Cast Kyle MacLachlan, Sheryl Lee, Sherilyn Fenn, Ray Wise, Mädchen Amick, Peggy Lipton, Everett McGill, Wendy Robie, Kimmy Robertson, Naomi Watts, Michael Cera **Showrunner** David Lynch **UK** Sky Atlantic/2017 **US** Showtime/2017

IT'S HARD TO THINK OF ANOTHER SHOW IN RECENT MEMORY THAT HAS CAUSED SUCH CONFLICTING FEELINGS OF "I MUST KNOW everything about it!" and "I don't want to hear a single word!" And we still have a way to go until we actually see any of the return to the town of Twin Peaks.

So what do we know? Lynch and Frost are writing the 18-episode season, and Lynch is directing all of it. It's definitely going to have that premium *Twin Peaks* flavour, even though not all of the cast are

returning (Michael Ontkean, Lara Flynn Boyle, Joan Chen and Piper Laurie are out, among others). That cast list with 217 names on it also included a lot of exciting faces, including Naomi Watts, Robert Forster and Trent Reznor.

As for the story? Well, it looks like it will focus on a female FBI agent compiling a dossier on the *Twin Peaks* case and the missing Agent Cooper, but we'll have to see. We're willing to bet that the owls are still not what they seem.





COVER FEATURE

Horror

HORROR 32

SEASON 7

THE WALKING DEAD

Cast Andrew Lincoln, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Norman Reedus, Melissa McBride, Lennie James
Showrunner Scott M Gimple **UK** FOX/October 2016 **US** AMC/October 2016

THE WALKING DEAD HAS NEVER BEEN ONE TO SHY AWAY FROM A GOOD CLIFFHANGER ENDING. BUT SEASON SIX'S FINALE, 'LAST DAY ON EARTH', TOOK IT

to a whole other level. After a sinister but captivating ten-minute monologue from the show's new antagonist Negan, played by the brilliant Jeffrey Dean Morgan, we've been left with a few months to ponder just who of the group was unfortunate enough to get violently bludgeoned to death in the final scene.

At this point, all we know is that we want to see more of Morgan's take on Negan, and we want to see it now. Showrunner Scott M Gimple agrees. "It is thrilling to watch an actor who has a role that excites them this much," he says. "He seems to be loving every minute, and it's infectious... [We wanted] someone who could embody the charisma, the id, the humour, and the horror that Negan can bring in a single moment."

After mulling it over, we've decided that we have absolutely no idea as to who is going to bite the dust. Fans of the comics may have formed their

own theories, but just how closely will Season Seven follow the source material? "Very closely," Gimple tells us, "but with some key details 'remixed', both to accommodate differences in the show to the book, but also to hopefully surprise comics fans with different routes to key moments from the books."

However, there are a few characters that we reckon *won't* die. The first on our list of definite survivors is Rick Grimes. He's obviously not going anywhere because he's the leader. What would have been the point of the last six years if Rick's final downfall ended up being several blows to the head with a baseball bat?

The same goes for Carl. Even with all the couples drama going on, the core relationship of the show has always been between father and son. Surely they should die together or not at all? And Carl has just lost an eye; the show would be missing a trick if it didn't take time to explore the difficulties surrounding that.

We're also pretty certain that Glenn is safe. The comic would suggest otherwise, but that would be too predictable. We've



Negan made his scene-stealing entrance at the end of Season Six.

already had an 'Is Glenn dead? Is he not?' cliffhanger this season in 'Thank You'. Two in 14 episodes would just be lazy.

People have their money on Daryl Dixon being safe from harm, but we're not so sure. He may be a fan favourite, but that doesn't mean he's invincible. All the better to break your hearts into a million pieces, my dears. There's also the fact that Norman Reedus has been doing a lot of other work recently. He's even got his own documentary show, *Ride With Norman Reedus*. Perhaps he's developed a taste for things that aren't *The Walking Dead* and wants out.

Whatever happens, we're sure it will be both spectacular and extremely gory.



Carol (Melissa McBride) is one of the few who's definitely safe for Season Seven.



For once, the walkers will be the least of their worries.



"IT IS THRILLING TO WATCH AN ACTOR WHO HAS A ROLE THAT EXCITES THEM THIS MUCH"
SCOTT M GIMPLE



WHEEL OF MISFORTUNE

Who's going to be Negan's first victim? Let's take a look at everyone's odds of becoming the chosen one...

10/1

CARL

It would be gutting if Carl died after he survived being shot in the face.

8/1

AARON

He hasn't contributed much so far. He needs more time to shine.

9/2

SASHA

Seemingly with a death wish in Season Six, maybe now's her time.

100/1

RICK

He's the group's leader and the show's protagonist. He can't die yet.

4/1

ROSITA

Rosita isn't as memorable or well-developed as a lot of her peers.

4/1

GLENN

Glenn is going to be a dad! But he's also the one who dies in the comics.

8/1

MAGGIE

She's pregnant, she can't die now. That would be too upsetting.

20/1

DARYL

He has always been a fan favourite. But Reedus also has a new show...

10/1

MICHONNE

After everything, being bludgeoned on her knees would be an insult.

10/3

ABRAHAM

As far as expendable goes, he's near the top of the list.

HORROR

33

THE STRAIN

Cast Corey Stoll, David Bradley, Kevin Durand, Richard Sammel, Jack Kesy, Miguel Gomez
Showrunner Carlton Cuse **UK** Watch/TBC **US** FX/TBC

THE STRAIN HAS CONSISTENTLY DELIVERED MYSTERY AFTER MYSTERY AND ENIGMA AFTER ENIGMA, AND NOW, WITH SEASON

Three on the horizon, anything could happen. Here are the major queries we want answered...

Is the Strain going worldwide?

Most likely. Season Two ended on an excruciating cliffhanger, with the virus breaking out of New York and into the rest of the world. Based on every virus-centric disaster film and TV show ever made, we can safely presume that this is a bad thing. There's no telling what the consequences will be as the virus starts to spread to other states and countries (unless you've read Chuck Hogan and Guillermo del Toro's books, obviously), but it's sure to start a whole new chapter for *The Strain*.

Is Eph okay?

Eph has never really been okay. Season Three could finally be time for him to turn over a new leaf, but we're doubtful. First, there was all that stuff with his ex-

wife and losing custody of his son. Next, there was that other stuff with his ex-wife turning his girlfriend into a vampire and causing the latter to kill herself. And then mixed in with all of that there's been excessive drinking and accidentally lobbing people off trains. Poor Eph.

Is this the last season?

The book series the TV show was based on is a trilogy, so that could mean that Season Three will be the last. When the show first started, FX expressed an interest in making a close-ended series with three to five seasons, so to finish here would make sense. However, co-creator del Toro has previously said that the first and second books could fill a full season each, while the third and final book could be split into two.

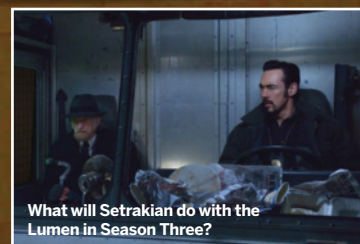
What's Setrakian up to?

Season Two left us with Abraham Setrakian (David Bradley) venturing off into open waters with Quinlan (Rupert

Penry-Jones) and Fet (Kevin Durand), finally in possession of the Occido Lumen. But how is this all going to play out? After everything it took to get a hold of it, it better be worth it. We're hoping the conclusion for this particular storyline will pay off in a big way. And by 'in a big way', we mean with the Master meeting his death.

Will Eldritch Palmer go good?

He's always been a bit shifty, and we know he didn't like him, but we never thought that Eldritch Palmer (Jonathan Hyde) would go so far as to actively work against Eichorst at the end of Season Two. To be honest, we don't blame him. And then everything that happened with Coco was just the gloopy icing on the terrible, terrible cake. But what does that mean for Palmer? Has the Master gone too far? Will this be the moment that sees him turn against his boss?



What will Setrakian do with the Lumen in Season Three?

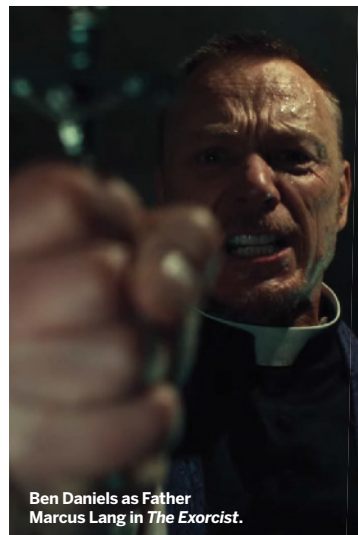




34 THE EXORCIST

Cast Geena Davis, Ben Daniels, Alfonso Herrera, Hannah Kasulka
Showrunners Jeremy Slater, David C Robinson, Rolin Jones **UK** TBC/TBC **US** FOX/TBC

SOMEONE IMPORTANT PASSED A LAW WHILE WE WEREN'T LOOKING DECREED THAT EVERY SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES horror film has to be made into a TV series, so after the likes of *Damien* and *Hannibal*, a reimagining of *The Exorcist* was obviously next on the cards. A few people have been scoffing at it but, you know, we'll see how it goes. The cast is pretty sweet though, with Geena Davis (*Beetlejuice*) in a role akin to Chris MacNeil from the original, and Alfonso Herrera (*Sense8*) and Ben Daniels (*The Hollow Crown*) as Father Tomas Ortega and Father Marcus Lang.



Ben Daniels as Father Marcus Lang in *The Exorcist*.

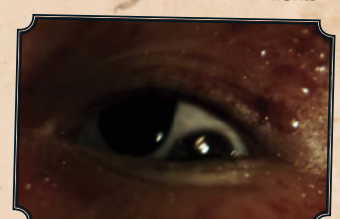
WHAT AN EXCELLENT DAY FOR AN EXORCISM

The absolute creepiest moments from *The Exorcist's* first trailer...



WHEN THE CROW CRASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW

What the hell, *The Exorcist*? What are you trying to do to us? Why was that necessary? We're not going to lie; we jumped more than Geena Davis.



THIS CRAZY DOUBLE EYEBALL

The bloody, writhing child tied to the bed was creepy enough. We did not need to see this, thanks very much. The sweat and broken veins just make it worse.



THE GIRL IN THE LOFT

We knew nothing good would come from checking out the loft as soon as Alfonso Herrera pulled down the ladder. Now look what happened. You're all screwed.



THE GIRL FROM THE LOFT'S FACE

We are 100 per cent not down for this. Granted, it's nowhere near as creepy as Regan MacNeil's possession, but it sent shivers down our spines nevertheless.

35 TALES FROM THE CRYPT

Cast TBC **Showrunner** M Night Shyamalan **UK** TBC/TBC **US** TNT/TBC

ANTHOLOGY IS A GREAT FORMAT FOR HORROR TV, BECAUSE YOU CAN LITERALLY DO WHATEVER YOU WANT WITH IT. YOU can kill characters off in gruesome ways every week because they're not making it too far anyway. You can come back after a season break and change the storyline completely. Everyone and everything is expendable. It's easy to see why the likes of *American Horror Story*, *True Detective*, *Black Mirror* and *Fargo* are currently leading the way for modern anthology series.

The next new anthology story is coming in the form of a revival of HBO's *Tales From The Crypt*, imagined by M Night Shyamalan, which will no doubt take us back to the time of *Masters Of Horror*, *The Twilight Zone* and indeed the original *Tales From The Crypt* series.

Things are being changed up a little, though. For starters, it's moving to TNT. The iconic Crypt Keeper puppet won't be appearing, what with it being property of HBO, but Shyamalan has promised to deliver a "cool and dark" version instead.



COMEDY



36 THE GOOD PLACE

Kristen Bell's new American fantasy-comedy proves there's much more to life after death

Cast Kristen Bell, Ted Danson, Jameela Jamil **Showrunner** Mike Schur
UK TBC/TBC **US** NBC/19 September

THE PREMISE ALONE FOR THIS NEW HALF-HOUR COMEDY FROM NBC HAS US HOOKED: KRISTEN BELL (VERONICA MARS) PLAYS ELEANOR SHELLSTROP, A WOMAN WHO FINDS HERSELF IN THE AFTERLIFE AFTER BEING KILLED BY A TRACTOR-TRAILER CARRYING ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION PRODUCTS. AS IT TURNS OUT, THE AFTERLIFE IS KIND OF DULL. NO one cusses, no one gets drunk, and everyone is super peppy all the time. Realising just how much she misses the bleakness of Earth, Eleanor does everything she can to get back there. As if that wasn't enough, the brilliant Ted Danson is co-starring, as is British radio presenter Jameela Jamil for some reason.

It looks like NBC has a lot of faith in it, considering that the network gave it a 13-episode straight-to-series order in August last year. Could *The Good Place* set the bar for 2016's collection of US-made genre comedies?

37 POWERLESS

Cast Vanessa Hudgens, Danny Pudi, Alan Tudyk, Christina Kirk, Kate Micucci
Showrunner Ben Queen **UK** TBC/TBC **US** NBC/TBC

THE DC COMICS ON-SCREEN UNIVERSE GETS SHAKEN UP – AND A WHOLE LOT OF PAPERWORK – IN NEW SITCOM

Powerless. Where there are villains causing havoc and tearing cities to the ground, there are superheroes stopping them. And where there are superheroes, there are insurance companies trying to cover the costs. *Sucker Punch*'s Vanessa Hudgens stars as an enthusiastic insurance claims adjuster who gains some confidence after standing up to a superhero, but she quickly clashes with her new boss Del (Alan Tudyk), who is determined to make life a bit more difficult for everyone.



38 RED DWARF SERIES 11

Cast Chris Barrie, Craig Charles, Danny John-Jules, Robert Llewellyn
Showrunner Doug Naylor **UK** Dave/September **US** TBC/TBC

IT'S BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE RED DWARF X, AND WE'RE STARTING TO GET WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS. THANKFULLY, EVERYONE'S

favourite British sci-fi sitcom is almost back on our screens. Rimmer, Lister, Cat and Kryten return for a gag-packed series in which Rimmer accidentally saves the life of a Space Corps Captain, Cat falls in love, Lister gets some of his body parts stolen by a deranged droid, and Kryten has a mid-life crisis with almost catastrophic consequences.

With *Red Dwarf XII* on the way shortly after *Red Dwarf XI*, we're going to be

seeing a lot of the Starbug crew over the next year or so. But it doesn't stop there! The cast has also revealed that something special could also be on the way.

"We're thinking of doing a *Red Dwarf* stage show," Craig Charles told fan site *Planet Smeg*. "It would be great if we could have Starbug crashing through the back of the theatre and landing on the stage. A bit like *Mary Poppins*, but with a spaceship rather than an umbrella." According to Charles, everyone is up for it; they just need to find the time to actually write the thing.



WHAT A HELL OF A WAY TO DIE



NIKKI AND PAOLO (LOST)

Spider bites and being buried alive aren't usually laughing matters, but as it's Nikki and Paolo... that episode was a gift, and we're grateful for it.



GEORGE LASS (DEAD LIKE ME)

There aren't a lot of protagonists that could pull off death by blunt force trauma after being hit by a toilet seat falling from space, but George did it with style.



LONGSHADOW (TRUE BLOOD)

Longshadow's demise was more violent than funny, but it makes it into the list for its weirdness, lack of subtlety and sheer amount of blood.



EVERYONE THAT DIED IN 'BADLAA' (THE X-FILES)

Toilet-related deaths are tragic enough, but Badlaa climbing up inside folks' butts and operating them from within is pretty messed-up stuff.

ANIMATION

39 SON OF ZORN

Cast Jason Sudeikis, Billy Stevenson, Lars Slind **Showrunners** Reed Agnew, Eli Jorne
UK TBC/TBC **US** FOX/25 September

THE FIRST TRAILER FOR THIS FOX COMEDY SEEMED TO FLOP OFF THE INTERNET AND ONTO OUR LAPS FROM OUT OF NOWHERE.

It was one of those rare TV trailers that, within 30 seconds, had us saying, "Yes! This is good! We will like this!"

Part of the reason for that is the fact that the main character is animated, while the rest of the, um, everything is live action. Other reasons include the cartoon violence, gut-busting one-liners and the fact that the trailer is set to 'Macho Man' by the Village People. The protagonist Zorn (voiced by Jason Sudeikis), the Defender of Zephyria and Conqueror of the tribes of Agon, travels from a faraway island in the Pacific to Orange County, California, in an attempt to win back his ex-wife. From there, all sorts of crazy schemes and misunderstandings occur.

"IT HAS CARTOON VIOLENCE, GUT-BUSTING ONE-LINERS, AND A TRAILER SET TO THE VILLAGE PEOPLE'S MACHO MAN"

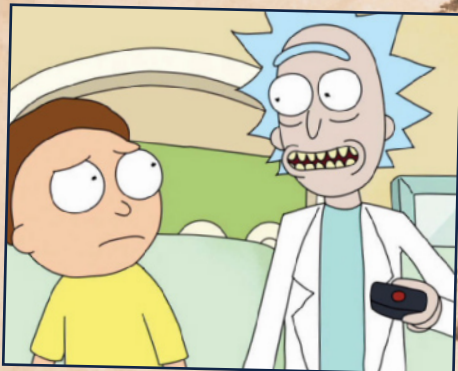


40 RICK & MORTY SEASON 3

Cast Justin Roiland, Chris Parnell, Spencer Grammer, Sarah Chalke **Showrunners** Dan Harmon, Justin Roiland
UK FOX/TBC **US** Adult Swim/26 July

THE GAP BETWEEN RICK AND MORTY SEASON TWO AND SEASON THREE HAS BEEN FAR TOO LONG FOR OUR LIKING, BUT THAT'S NOT THE ONLY THING THAT'S LONG;

Season Three will reportedly run for 14 episodes, as opposed to the usual ten. That's more than 80 extra minutes of hare-brained schemes, crazy science experiments, and weird and terrifying creatures. Co-creators Dan Harmon and Justin Roiland have also revealed that the show will start revisiting some old storylines, as well as bringing back a few fan-favourite characters from Season One and Two. A big old 'wubalubadubdub' to that.



41 STAR WARS REBELS SEASON 3

Cast Taylor Gray, Freddie Prinze Jr, Vanessa Marshall, Tiya Sircar, Steven Blum **Showrunners** Dave Filoni, Simon Kinberg, Carrie Beck **UK** Disney XD/TBC **US** XD/TBC

WITH KANAN BLINDED, AHSOKA MISSING IN ACTION AND DARTH MAUL RETURNING TO TEMPT EZRA TO THE DARK SIDE, SEASON THREE OF REBELS COULD take us anywhere. Things might also get a lot bigger now that co-creator Simon Kinberg has basically confirmed that it will cross over with the films again. Speaking to *MovieFone*, he said: "We keep bringing in characters from the original movies and deepening the relationships between our core characters. So it's trying to balance the two different things, like the original cast from the first season... and maybe even feeding into future movies."



42 TROLLHUNTERS

Cast Anton Yelchin, Ron Perlman, Kelsey Grammer
Showrunner Guillermo del Toro **UK** Netflix/TBC
US Netflix/TBC

GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S UPCOMING NETFLIX SERIES, TROLLHUNTERS, FOLLOWS A 15-YEAR-OLD BOY NAMED JIM AS HE UNCOVERS A WONDERFUL NEW WORLD OF trolls and magic. The show is also sure to be bittersweet: upon its release, *Trollhunters* was the last project to feature Anton Yelchin before his death. The actor was still recording the voice for the lead character before he unexpectedly passed, and there's still no telling what Netflix and DreamWorks Animation have planned to explain his absence. Also in the cast are Kelsey Grammer and del Toro's long-time collaborator Ron Perlman.



COVER FEATURE

Fantasy

FANTASY



Genre favourite Mark A Sheppard was made a series regular in Season Ten.

SEASON 12

43 SUPERNATURAL

The how and why Supernatural is the TV show that will never die...

Cast Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles, Misha Collins, Mark A Sheppard **Showrunners** Robert Singer, Andrew Dabb
UK E4/TBC **US** The CW/13 October

SUPERNATURAL'S ELEVENTH SEASON HASN'T EVEN FINISHED AIRING HERE YET, BUT WE'RE ALREADY TALKING ABOUT SEASON 12. IT'S TAKEN A WHILE, BUT THE UK broadcast is so very nearly in line with the US broadcast, which is glorious for one reason: there will soon be no more almost spoiling an entire season for ourselves every time we go online.

No more blacklisting the *Supernatural* tag on Tumblr. No more low-key hating American Twitter mutuals that don't waste time in posting spoilers after every episode. With only a few more

episodes of Season 11 left to go, we reckon E4 will be neck-and-neck with The CW by Christmas.

Season 12 might also be getting a bit of a makeover, what with previous showrunner Jeremy Carver stepping down from the helm to focus on The CW's new show *Frequency*. Carver is being replaced with a dream team made up of executive producers Robert Singer and Andrew Dabb.

It's no secret that *Supernatural's* quality has dipped a bit over the last few years (Season 11's Darkness storyline is

somewhat lacking), but there's still time for it to redeem itself. Maybe Singer and Dabb are enough to really turn the show around. With Season 13 already on the cards, it has a good 40 episodes *at least* to sort itself out again.



44 THE SHANNARA CHRONICLES SEASON 2

Cast Austin Butler, Ivana Baquero, Manu Bennett, Aaron Jakubenko
Showrunners Alfred Gough, Miles Millar **UK** 5*/TBC **US** MTV/TBC

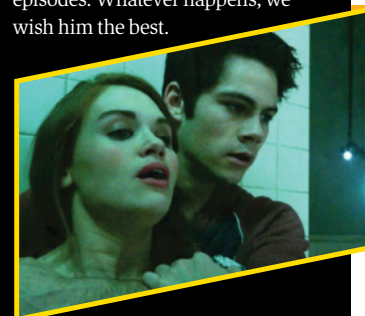
WITH ERETRIA GETTING CAPTURED BY TROLLS AND AMBERLE BECOMING THE NEW ELLCRYIS (A TREE, FOR NON-SHANNARA WATCHERS), WE'VE BEEN ABSOLUTELY DESPERATE FOR THE *Shannara Chronicles'* second season since April. "The people who have been involved with the show are very wedded to it," author Terry Brooks tells us. "I didn't expect the kind of passion I found in the actors and directors and writers... They really fought for that, so that was a very pleasant surprise to me. Obviously I would fight for it, but I'm always surprised that other people are so passionate about it."

SEASON 6

45 TEEN WOLF

Cast Tyler Posey, Dylan O'Brien, Holland Roden, Shelley Hennig, Dylan Sprayberry **Showrunner** Jeff Davis
UK 5star/TBC **US** MTV/TBC

TEEN WOLF'S SIXTH SEASON SHOULD HAVE ALREADY STARED AIRING, BUT FILMING WAS UNFORTUNATELY disrupted earlier this year when Dylan O'Brien was hospitalised after getting injured on the set of *Maze Runner: The Death Cure*. At the time of writing, we're still waiting on news of his return. He had already filmed a couple of episodes, but according to some sources the storyline will see him disappeared plot-wise for some episodes. Whatever happens, we wish him the best.



SEASON 6

46 ONCE UPON A TIME

Cast Jennifer Morrison, Ginnifer Goodwin, Josh Dallas **Showrunners** Adam Horowitz, Edward Kitsis **UK** Netflix/TBA **US** ABC/25 September

THANK THE STORYBROOKE GODS THAT ONCE UPON A TIME IS NOW ON NETFLIX. THE RETURN OF THE EVIL Queen in the Season Five finale can only mean one thing: shit is about to get real. There's also going to be a lot more drama for Season Six, owing to the fact that the story arcs are reverting back to their Season One ways and getting a lot smaller. The devil is in the details.



TIMEY-WIMEY

47 TIME AFTER TIME

Cast Freddie Stroma, Josh Bowman, Genesis Rodriguez, Nicole Ari Parker
Showrunner Kevin Williamson **UK** TBC/TBC **US** ABC/TBC

SUCKERS FOR TIME TRAVEL AND MODERN-DAY RETELLINGS WILL FIND A LOT TO LOVE IN TIME AFTER TIME, THE NEW SCIENCE FICTION DRAMA FROM ABC. OUR PROTAGONIST IS HG WELLS (FREDDIE STROMA), WHO FINDS HIMSELF TRANSPORTED TO MODERN-DAY NEW YORK. FROM THERE, HE SETS OFF ON A CAT-AND-MOUSE CHASE THROUGH Manhattan in an attempt to track down and catch Jack the Ripper. It sounds utterly ridiculous, but we're already completely sold. There's also some romance thrown into the mix when Wells steadily becomes besotted with a captivating young woman from the 21st Century.



50 DIMENSION 404

Cast Lea Michele, Robert Buckley, Joel McHale, Patton Oswalt, Ashley Rickards, Megan Mullally, Constance Wu **Showrunner** Dez Dolly **UK** TBC/TBC **US** Hulu/TBC

ALL YOUR FAVOURITE TV COMEDY ACTORS GET READY TO JUMP DIMENSIONS IN THIS SIX-EPISODE SCI-FI ANTHOLOGY SERIES FROM DEZ DOLLY AND WILL CAMPOS. EACH EPISODE, WHICH ARE LIKE HOUR-LONG SELF-CONTAINED FILMS, EXPLORE A UNIVERSE IN WHICH ONE thing is different from our own. In one universe, a bizarre cartoon holds the key to making time travel possible. In another, energy drinks inadvertently cause a worldwide apocalypse. Which doesn't sound like too wild a concept if you ask us.

"Inspired by our favourite anthologies and the notional, the Web is a truly strange place where anything is possible," Dolly told *Variety*, "We're letting our imaginations run wild and created a show that takes the viewer on a journey through the sci-fi genre."

With the added flawless comedy chops of the likes of Joel McHale (*Community*) and Ashley Rickards (*Awkward*), we're already suitably impressed and excited.

TIMEY-WIMEY
50 Must-See TV Shows



48 TIMELESS

Cast Goran Visnjic, Abigail Spencer, Matt Lanter, Malcolm Barrett, Sakina Jaffrey, Paterson Joseph **Showrunners** Eric Kripke, Shawn Ryan **UK** TBC/TBC **US** NBC/currently airing

TIME TRAVEL IS POPULAR THIS YEAR. IN THIS NEW SCI-FI DRAMA FROM SUPERNATURAL AND REVOLUTION

creator Eric Kripke, master criminal Garcia Flynn (Goran Visnjic) gets his hands on a time machine, and uses it to go back and change American history as we know it. When the government catch wind of what he's up to, it sends a history professor (Abigail Spencer), a soldier (Matt Lanter) and a scientist (Malcolm Barrett) after him to undo the damage before it goes any further. If they can't fix the space-time continuum, it could change the world as we know it forever.



49 FREQUENCY

Cast Peyton List, Riley Smith, Mekhi Phifer, Anthony Ruivivar, Lenny Jacobson, Devin Kelley **Showrunner** Jeremy Carver **UK** TBC/TBC **US** The CW/5 October

THIS ONE IS KIND OF LIKE TIME TRAVEL, BUT NOT QUITE. IT'S MORE TIME TRAVEL IF IT HAPPENED OVER RADIO WAVES.

Detective Raimy Sullivan's (Peyton List) life is turned upside-down when on a complete whim she finds out that she is able to speak to her deceased father via ham radio. Obviously, they use the opportunity to forge a new father-daughter relationship, and work on an unresolved murder case together. But it's not all fun and roses. Solving the case somehow leads to a butterfly effect, and Raimy gets dragged into a world in which her life is totally different.



Community's Joel McHale will star in Dimension 404 as Mr Maker.



© Gage Skidmore

A photograph of Guillermo del Toro and Christopher Lee. Guillermo del Toro stands in the background, wearing a black suit and a blue shirt. Christopher Lee sits in the foreground in a red leather chair, wearing a patterned cardigan. On a tray in front of him is a tea set with a teapot, cups, and a plate of biscuits. Several small, detailed creature props are visible: a skeleton on the chair back, a skeleton pouring tea, a skeleton holding a tray, and a man in a fur coat in the lower left. The scene is framed by an ornate, carved wooden border.

GUILLERMO DEL TORO TAKES
US INSIDE HIS INCREDIBLE
CREATURE COLLECTION



THE EXPERIENCE OF WATCHING A GUILLERMO DEL TORO FILM ISN'T REALLY LIKE WATCHING OTHER MOVIES. NO OTHER MODERN

filmmaker delivers such intricately crafted and beautifully detailed work with as much sincere and proud adoration for the work that inspired it. From *Crimson Peak* and *Hellboy* to *Pacific Rim* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, each film is a treasure trove to be returned to again and again. Naturally, the director's passion for monsters, the weird and the wonderful doesn't begin and end with his films. ➤

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

At home with MONSTERS

“THEY BELONG IN A MUSEUM!”

The most beautiful del Toro moments from each of his films



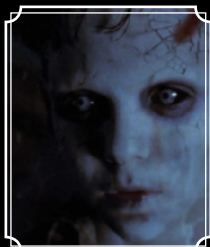
THE CRONOS DEVICE
Cronos (1993)

Del Toro's first film features one of his most memorable creations: the blend of clockwork and creature that is the vampiric device. Just beautiful.



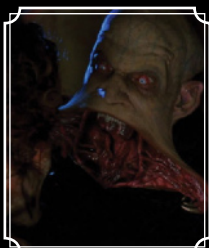
THE PUPAE
Mimic (1997)

The much-interfered-with creature feature is vastly improved by its director's cut, which shows off the incredible sets and glorious monsters.



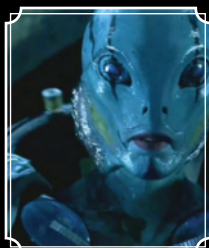
SANTI
The Devil's Backbone (2001)

The ghost of Santi is absolutely unforgettable, with the skin around his wound cracked like white paint and red blood drifting into the air like water.



THE REAPERS
Blade II (2002)

The design of the super vampires is disgusting and wonderful, with their second mouth and hardened ribcage. You want to both look away and look closer.



ABE SAPIEN
Hellboy (2004)

A lot of the film is pure Mike Mignola, but it's hard to look at Doug Jones' Abe Sapien and not think of del Toro's love for *The Creature From The Black Lagoon*.



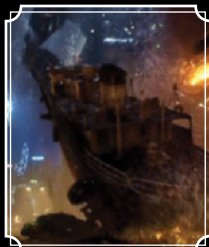
MANDRAKE BABY
Pan's Labyrinth (2006)

We are so spoiled for choice when it comes to del Toro's masterpiece, but we've decided to go with the Mandrake root baby, which is both adorable and grotesque.



THE GOLDEN ARMY
Hellboy II (2008)

Again littered with wonders, but the looming Angel of Death is the stand-out. It's frightening and beautiful, and wonderfully played – again – by Doug Jones.



GIPSY DANGER + SHIP
Pacific Rim (2013)

The bit in *Pacific Rim* where Gipsy Danger uses a ship to clobber a Kaiju is only slightly better than when we find out it's got a bloody sword!



ALLERDALE HALL
Crimson Peak (2015)

We can't pick a sole highlight from the glorious mansion. It's exquisitely designed, and one of the most beautiful things he's ever created.



➤ He has two houses – what he calls his 'Bleak Houses' – filled with artwork, books, statues and more, and now he is making some of his collection available for the public to view at the Los Angeles County Museum Of Art in an exhibition called 'At Home With Monsters'.

"It's very hard to represent the house in an exhibition, because Bleak House is more like a working, living library collection that is sort of an inspiration engine," del Toro tells us. "Every time I walk in there's something beautiful or wonderful that inspires me. There's a fantastic collection of books that is lodged in 13 libraries around the two houses, but there are also paintings by Giger, drawings by Moebius, Edward Gorey, Mike Mignola, Richard Corben, Bernie Wrightson and so forth. The impact it has is really powerful. We are doing a very judicious selection that represents about 20 per cent of the collection, but it gives you a little bit of the flavour."

This varied collection isn't just a genre treasure trove; it shows the collision between what's seen as 'high art' and 'low art', and that loving one doesn't mean hating the other. "We are in the 21st Century, and I think that the camps are still somewhat divided," he says. "You have people that fight for pop culture and only pop culture, negating the other side, which is to be able to appreciate the



beauty and the power of the traditions that came before and the value of the artistic license of surrealism and abstract art, expressionism and impressionism and so forth. But to say 'Look, you can be guided by love' is really great."

It is all about love. That inspirational element is very important to the filmmaker, who hopes that visitors to the exhibition will find themselves as moved by the assembled works as he has been.

"If I was a young artist interested in the fantastic, it's a very stimulating look at art that is popular next to art that is enthroned by museums and prestige," he enthuses. "I love the idea of a Gustave Doré next to a Bernie Wrightson, you know? I love the idea of seeing an [James] Ensor next to a Moebius! Because that's the way I love art: by loving the art I love,

GUILLERMO DEL TORO

At Home With Monsters

and not the art that I am allowed to love. So in my pantheon of movies, I have *Children Of Paradise*, *The 400 Blows* or *Citizen Kane*, but I also have *The Thing* or *Kill Baby Kill* by Mario Bava! I think that it's a really beautiful way of showing that the impulse behind my movies and what I do is the same as the things I collect. It's purely the love of monsters, in a way."

THAT FANTASTIC STEW OF INTERESTS AND INFLUENCES IS PART OF WHAT MAKES DEL TORO SUCH AN EXCITING FILMMAKER. HE APPROACHES HIS

big-budget studio blockbusters like *Blade II* and *Pacific Rim* with exactly the same love and passion as he does his critically acclaimed arthouse films, such as *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*. There's no 'one for them, one for me' with del Toro. All of his movies are for him, and that's one of the things that his exhibition illustrates.

"In terms of art pieces, I have thousands in the house. There are bronzes, there are acrylics, there are oil paintings, there are life-size, hyper-realistic renditions of creatures or characters I love, there are larger-than-life renditions of characters I love, there are automatons, there is Victoriana, and there are anatomical oddities," he explains.

"All these things are really like an exploded view of my brain, in the same way that I think my movies are. The movies I do are not for everyone, but they are definitely movies that connect very deeply with the people they connect with. And they attract a lot of creators. They attract people that draw, write and direct. And that's primarily the art that I collect: art that is created by people that inspired



© Insight Editions

me as an artist, storyteller, draftsman or director."

The release of any del Toro film shows just how powerfully his work inspires others. *Crimson Peak* was accompanied by beautiful Mondo posters by Daniel Danger and Guy Davis, the Blu-ray release of *Pan's Labyrinth* has unveiled wonderful new artwork by Becky Cloonan, and unofficial fan art that shows just how strongly people connect with these films.

"I really love that," enthuses del Toro. "I, in fact, have bought about eight pieces of fan art because I like it so much. I really identify with them, because that's the way I was when I was a young artist. I would draw *The Creature From The Black Lagoon* and *The Phantom Of The Opera* when I was a kid. And it's really great, especially when you see a drawing of, say, Gipsy Danger fighting a Kaiju by a kid; it's really beautiful and heart-warming."

One of the most exciting things on display in this exhibition will be del Toro's famous notebooks. The filmmaker fills pages with notes and sketches for the projects that he's working on, although he tells us that his process has changed a little in recent years, in part thanks to a film that he didn't even end up directing.

"It used to be very natural. That kind of sputtered to a much smaller output after *The Hobbit*, because we had a secrecy clause in where nothing I drew could ➤



Del Toro's collection includes life-size replicas of characters from various films, including *Freaky*.

ALL THESE THINGS ARE REALLY LIKE AN EXPLODED VIEW OF MY BRAIN, IN THE SAME WAY THAT I THINK THAT MY MOVIES ARE

GUILLERMO DEL TORO



One of *Bleak House*'s features is a window that looks out onto a dark, rainy night. 24-7.

➤ be shown. So I started to rely more on my group of artists to do the concepts, and it's never come back quite at the same level. I used to dedicate 30-40 pages to a project scattered through a couple of notebooks. Now, I dedicate three or four pages to a project, because I'm narrating everything in the art room. So it's trickled down, but I try to still be not self-conscious about it."

HOWEVER, WHILE THE NOTEBOOKS MAY BE GETTING SMALLER, SKETCHING REMAINS A CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF THE FILMMAKER'S

preparation, even if they don't always reach the hallowed pages of a notebook. "The main thing for me is I doodle – I cannot have a conference call with a designer or visual collaborator, because I'm constantly doodling on napkins or paper!" he tells us. "Because I communicate my ideas better through a few lines than if I simply describe them. So every time I go to a meeting, my assistant knows there has to be a stack of notebooks and a couple of pens."

The end result of those sketches has been the creation of some of the most memorable and beautiful creatures, machines and sets of modern cinema. He

can make us fall in love with giant robots (the international Jaegers of *Pacific Rim*) and monsters (the hugely likeable blue-collar heroes of *Hellboy*). His ghosts in *The Devil's Backbone* and *Crimson Peak* are terrifying, but designed so beautifully that you can't help but stare, and the same goes for the anatomy of his creatures in *Mimic* and *Blade II*. Every prop is a work of art. While *Crimson Peak's* Allerdale Hall was dismantled (but we should never lose sight of the fact that they actually built it), we're not at all surprised that HISs Bleak Houses are brimming with items from his own films.

"Well, sometimes I take one or two props from a movie," he admits. "If the shoot has been particularly painful I take relatively little – I only have one prop from *Mimic*, and only a couple of props from *Pan's Labyrinth*, because it was a very difficult shoot. But we're going to have some beautiful original statues of the Pale Man and Pan from *Pan's Labyrinth*, and Santi from *Devil's Backbone*. We're going to have the original Book of Crossroads from *Pan's Labyrinth*, and we're going to have the original monolith that appears at the beginning of the movie with the missing eye that the girl puts the eye on. We're going to have a few of those props,

we're going to have props from *Pacific Rim* and *Crimson Peak*, we'll have a lot from *Hellboy* and so on and so forth."

Those props and drawings, combined with the art, books and arcana that he has accumulated over the years, make for the kind of collection that fans can only dream of. However, he's quick to stress that none of this came about because he wanted to amass pristine objects that would only appreciate in value.

"In *Bleak House* I have my first book, my first toy, and like every other geek, my mother threw my comic books away!" he tells us. "So a lot of the original comics were lost, but in my opinion you either become a collector one way or another, which is the way I do it, which is religious. In other words, I don't have the mind of a collector; I don't know the market value of a comic book, and I am not trying to get a finer grade of comic book. I don't want them in bags, I don't want the toys in the boxes, you know? I like to enjoy them; I like to play with them, read them. I'm much more promiscuous in one way, and in another I'm very religious. For me it's

not a collection; it's an altar. So it's full of relics of beautiful images that are for me very spiritual, because to me, monsters are to movies what saints are to Catholic religion. They represent something very deeply and spiritually ingrained in me."

Given how much the collection means to del Toro, we can't help but wonder how he feels about the prospect of sharing it with the world, even if it is only about 20 per cent of the grand total. "We'll see, right?" he laughs. "I think what is very strange to me is to live for a couple of years without it. There were offers for the collection to travel to Berlin, Paris, London, Mexico and Barcelona, and at the moment when we were packing the collection, I actually said, 'I don't want to travel to any more than three museums that we agreed.' Because it was like letting your family go for a vacation of 18 months. And I'm gonna miss it." ☺

Guillermo del Toro: At Home With Monsters runs from 1 August to 27 November at the Los Angeles County Museum Of Art (LACMA).

MONSTERS REALLY REPRESENT SOMETHING VERY DEEPLY AND VERY SPIRITUALLY INGRAINED IN ME
GUILLERMO DEL TORO



Del Toro's legendary production sketchbook will also be on display.

THE GUILLERMO DEL TORO FUTURE PROJECT COLLECTION

Marvel at everything GDT has coming up...

THE SHAPE OF WATER (2017)

While del Toro's collection is being opened to the public, the filmmaker will be hard at work on his next film, which would seem to be called *The Shape Of Water*. He's been cagey on details, but early reports suggest that the film is a 1963-set Cold War 'otherworldly' love story. The prevalent rumour going around is that it's about a woman working in a government laboratory who falls for the creature that is being experimented on, but that is neither been confirmed nor denied.

What we do know is that the cast is spectacular. The brilliant Sally Hawkins (*Happy Go-Lucky*, *Submarine*, *Godzilla*) leads, and is supported by Octavia Spencer (*Snowpiercer*, *The Help*), Michael Shannon (*Midnight Special*, *Man Of Steel*), Richard Jenkins (*Six Feet Under*, *The Cabin In The Woods*) and Michael Stuhlbarg (*Steve Jobs*, *Boardwalk Empire*).

We couldn't let our time talking to del Toro pass without pressing him for at least some details on this movie, and he was kind of enough to give us a little sneak peek.

"I'm really happy with the cast," he told us. "It's taken the better part of a year to assemble, mostly because I wrote several of the parts specifically for those actors. So I would meet with them, pitch them the movie, let them read what I had, and then write the actual draft based on that cast, which I've only done a couple of times – I did it with *Hellboy*, I did it with *Pan's Labyrinth*, I did it for [Federico] Luppi in *Cronos* – but other than that I have basically never done it. Really, the key to a movie like this is the cast, and that includes the creature. There is a single monster in this movie, and we have spent the better part of nine months or longer creating it, designing it and so forth."

Could this be his *Creature From The Black Lagoon*? We can't wait to find out.



CARNIVAL ROW (2017)

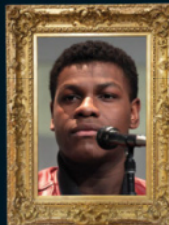
Pacific Rim writer Travis Beacham has been shopping *Carnival Row* around in various forms for 11 years, and now it's finally got a pilot order at Amazon, with del Toro on co-writing and pilot-directing duties. The show will plunge into an 18th century London-esque city called The Burgue, where humans and monsters co-exist and a serial killer is stalking the streets. It's hard not to read that synopsis and not think of the Troll Market sequence in *Hellboy II*, which is definitely a good thing.



PACIFIC RIM: MAELSTROM (2018 TBC)

The news that *Pacific Rim 2* was finally a-go was bittersweet for us, as it was revealed that del Toro would not be back to direct. However, he's staying on board as a producer, and we're intrigued by the choice of *Daredevil* showrunner Steven S DeKnight to direct.

Perhaps even more exciting was the announcement that John Boyega would be starring as the son of Idris Elba's Stacker Pentecost. We don't yet know if any of the original cast will return to help him cancel the apocalypse again, but we wouldn't be surprised.



© Gage Skidmore

SCARY STORIES TO TELL IN THE DARK (TBC)

The announcement was made some time ago that del Toro was attached to a film of Alvin Schwartz's notoriously terrifying children's novel trilogy, and it's been a bit quiet since. However, *The Lego Movie* writers Dan and Kevin Hageman joined the production back in February, stepping in for *Big Fish*'s John August. It's worth pointing out that del Toro is only 'potentially' directing this one.



FANTASTIC VOYAGE

Del Toro was in talks to direct the latest version of *Fantastic Voyage* in January, but we've not heard anything since. The remake of the 1966 sci-fi classic is being produced by James Cameron, who worked with del Toro on his abandoned *At The Mountains Of Madness* movie. And no, there hasn't been any word on that being miraculously resurrected.



JUSTICE LEAGUE DARK

It looks as though we'll never see del Toro's take on characters like John Constantine, The Spectre, Swamp Thing and more, as the studio ultimately decided not to move ahead with his screenplay. His schedule would have made directing tricky anyway, but it's hard to not feel like this is a missed opportunity.



THE HAUNTED MANSION

We're really rooting for this to happen at some point, not just because the Eddie Murphy version was such an abomination, but because it looked like Ryan Gosling would star in it. Those pictures of del Toro and Gosling hanging out at Disneyland together gave us life.



HELLBOY III

One day. This has to happen one day. As long as Ron Perlman has breath left in his body, we hope that we'll finally get to see the final chapter in what could be a brilliant trilogy.



SILENT HILLS

Never happening. We'll just be over here, crying.





SET VISIT

Don't Breathe

B L I N D H O R R O R

WE TALK TO THE CAST AND DIRECTOR OF DON'T BREATHE
ABOUT BRINGING HORROR BACK INTO OUR GOOD BOOKS

WORDS WILL LAWRENCE

DEEP IN A WAREHOUSE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BUDAPEST, DIRECTOR FEDE ALVAREZ AND HIS TEAM HAVE REBUILT THE INNARDS OF A DETROIT

townhouse. The exterior will be shot on location in the real American city, in a street where most of the inhabitants have already moved away. But the interior they've constructed in Hungary is very particular, for this is the home of a blind man, played by Hollywood veteran Stephen Lang, who stars as a former member of the US military who has lost his eyesight to shrapnel.

His home is set up in a very specific manner. The furniture is pushed up against the walls; the rugs and carpets are taped down, and a thin layer of dust covers the surfaces. There are no newspapers, books or magazines. The whole house feels worn and somewhat shabby.

This is the set of *Don't Breathe* (aka *A Man In The Dark*), and Lang's character is known only as 'the Blind Man'. The filmmakers have set him up, initially at least, as a victim. Three young robbers will invade his Detroit home – teenagers who are targetting vulnerable properties in the city as they bid to harvest enough cash to flee the area and start new lives elsewhere. Once they enter the Blind Man's home, however, the tables begin to turn.

The film comes courtesy of Uruguayan director and co-writer Alvarez, who boosted his international profile with the 2013 remake of the Sam Raimi-directed classic *Evil Dead*. When explaining his latest offering, he remembers watching *The Lovely Bones*, and cites the scene where Rose McIver's Lindsay breaks into the house belonging to the Stanley Tucci's ghastly serial killer George Harvey.

"It was so scary," the director says of the Peter Jackson adaptation. "People would jump in their seats. I was like, 'Why are people terrified?' It's to do with the concept of walking into someone else's domain because there you are under their rules. We wanted to make something that was very, very suspenseful. We thought, 'What is one of the things that creates a lot of suspense?' For me, it is when you have a character walking into someone else's domain."

In Alvarez's latest offering (on which Raimi serves as a producer), the suspense arrives when three young robbers enter the Blind Man's domain and find themselves very much under his rules. He's an intimidating character, brought to life on screen by Lang, who impressed playing tough nut Miles Quaritch in *Avatar*. And while he's initially the victim of the three intruders – played by rising stars Jane Levy (*Suburgatory*), Dylan Minnette (*Goosebumps*) and Daniel Zovatto (*It Follows*) – the audience's loyalties may well switch through the course of the film.

"Fede likes to play with the roles that are at the heart of the story," offers Jane Levy, who worked with Alvarez on *Evil Dead*. "The protagonists, the victims – they're all mixed together. You are not necessarily going to know who is the survivor in the end."

Levy stars as Rocky, the girl in the group. "She's cool because she's like an antihero," says the actress. "I don't know how many people are going to like her, but I think you will root for her, hopefully."

Making up the trio are Minnette, playing Alex, who's the youngest and most impressionable member of the group, and



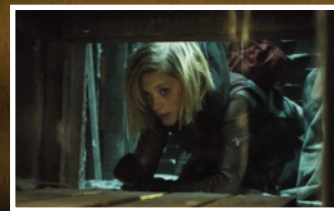
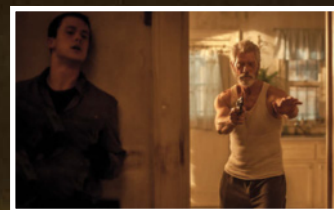
Turns out that breaking into Stephen Lang's house isn't a great idea.

Zovatto, who stars as Money, a tough-looking kid from a troubled background.

"I do think who you are rooting for in the movie is going to vary throughout," says Minnette. "At times, you will be rooting for people you wouldn't expect to be rooting for. I don't think you are going to know who to root for until you are done with the movie. I think your mind is going to change a lot."

While the teenagers are set up as the perpetrators, once they are in the Blind Man's home, they quickly become potential victims. The Blind Man is a lot tougher than they suspect given that he has a military background, and he harbours at least one dark secret. The characters, created by Alvarez and his long-time writing partner Rodo Sayagues, are riddled with ambiguities.

"I love movies that force me to pick sides, but don't give me the answers to the questions," says Alvarez. "In *Evil Dead* I had some of that. In Hollywood, sometimes they don't really give you much choice. But the characters I love ➤



Don't Breathe stars three young leads in Jane Levy, Dylan Minnette and Daniel Zovatto.

“WHAT CREATES A LOT OF SUSPENSE? WHEN YOU HAVE A CHARACTER WALKING INTO SOMEONE ELSE'S DOMAIN”
FEDE ALVAREZ





SET VISIT

Don't Breathe

“THE BENCHMARK THAT THIS FILM TRIES TO REACH – AND THIS IS ABOUT AS HIGH A BENCHMARK AS ONE CAN GET – IS PSYCHO”

STEPHEN LANG

➤ the most aren't the nicest people ever. There are a lot of great characters in movie history that were not nice. They have very shady morals.

“And that's what I'm trying to do in this movie: not give the audience good guys and a villain. They *all* are villains. All four of the people in this movie are doing something that is very, very wrong.”

As we watch a scene play out in the house – Money is suffering at the Blind Man's hands – we're left to ponder the nature of the film. There is some disagreement among Alvarez and his cast over the genre into which the film fits.

“This is where me and the director and a lot of people on set disagree,” laughs Levy. “Everyone likes to call it a thriller. To me it's 100 per cent a horror movie. It's very horrific. There is less blood than something like *Evil Dead*, but it is still terrifying and there's massive shock value. There is gore and violence.”

Lang, on the other hand, describes it as a thriller “with a dollop of horror thrown in”. He says, “The benchmark that this film tries to reach – and this is about as high a benchmark as one can get – is, of course, *Psycho*. Is *Psycho* a thriller or a horror film? It's really a thriller.”

The director agrees with Lang. “Our film is definitely a thriller, but also it's somewhere in between because it has horror elements,” he states. All the filmmakers are united in believing that they may well have broken new ground with the movie. “There are some pretty fucked-up choices that we make,” he continues with a smile. “There are some things that happen that are pretty particular. They have definitely never been done before, and there is a definite scene that I have never seen before. You'll know what it is when you see it.”

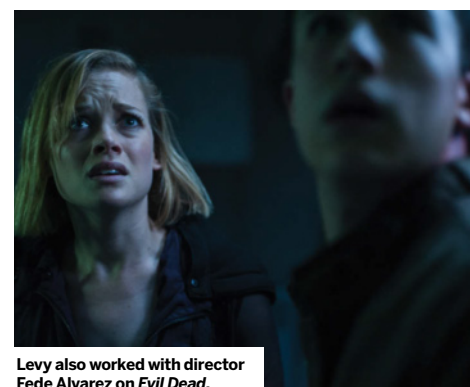
Zovatto agrees. “I feel like this movie is going to show a different side of Fede



It's fair to say that there aren't a lot of films like *Don't Breathe*.

that people haven't seen before,” says the actor, who starred in the hit underground horror film *It Follows*, as well as appearing in several episodes of *Fear The Walking Dead*. “It's so beautiful. There are some beautiful shots. I don't know where to put this movie,” he adds. “I don't know what it's going to be like when it's done. I think a lot of horror movies lately have been really shitty, if I'm honest with you. But this is something amazing.”

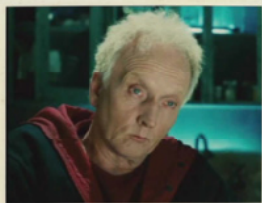
Don't Breathe will be released in the UK on 9 September.



Levy also worked with director Fede Alvarez on *Evil Dead*.

BURGLARY GAME PLAN

Note to self: don't burgle these houses. You'll end up dead...

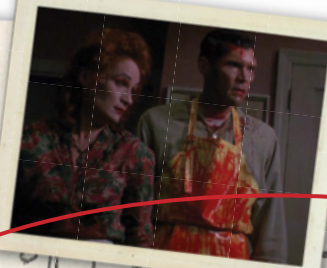


JOHN KRAMER (*Saw*)

He likes to play games, but he's not messing around. Stay away from this house at all costs unless you want to end up as a human kebab.

SYLVIA GANUSH (*Drag Me To Hell*)

This could be a potential burglary spot, but I run the risk of humiliating her. I really don't want to humiliate her. Curses are the worst.



PAMELA VOORHEES (*Friday The 13th*)

Anything she has got that's worth nicking isn't worth getting a machete to the head. There's no point even trying this one. Stay away.

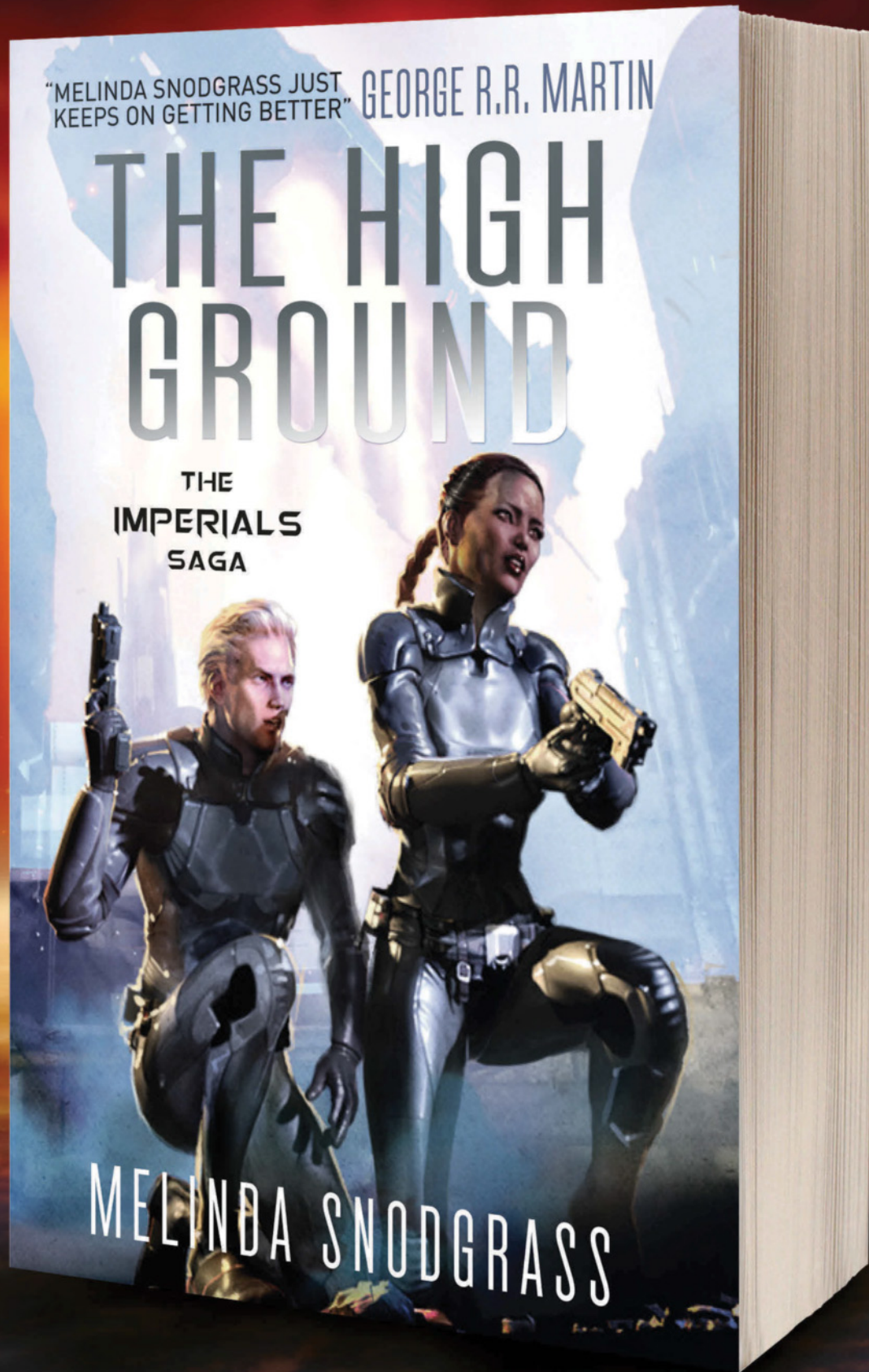
BABY JANE HUDSON (*What Ever Happened To Baby Jane?*)

The Hudson sisters have a lust for blood, but I especially don't want to get caught up in that family drama. Try again when they're on holiday.



"A GRAND SPACE OPERA."

BENNETT R. COLES (*VIRTUES OF WAR*)



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 **CULT MOVIE**
The Killing Joke

ALL IT TAKES IS ONE BAD DAY

KEVIN CONROY, MARK HAMILL AND BRUCE TIMM TELL US WHY THE KILLING JOKE IS BATMAN'S HOLY GRAIL

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

INTERVIEWS EDWARD GROSS

IT'S HARD TO THINK OF ANOTHER COMIC BOOK THAT PROVOKES SUCH FIERCE DISCUSSION AS ALAN MOORE AND BRIAN BOLLAND'S THE KILLING JOKE. IT'S SEEN

as the essential take on Batman and the Joker's relationship, and a glimpse into the villain's possible past. Also, its brutal treatment of Barbara Gordon has led to as much criticism as praise.

"There are a lot of sides to that," producer Bruce Timm tells us. "On one hand, it is one of those famous comics from the Eighties that brought worldwide attention to comics, and to *Batman* in particular. Tim Burton used to always cite it as his favourite *Batman* comic. It was one of the first really adult *Batman* stories that DC had ever done. It's pretty seminal; pretty important."

As the co-creator of *Batman: The Animated Series* and a key figure in DC's animated universe, Timm is one of the most respected people in the character's modern history. Following the success of the animation of Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* in 2012, rumours started that *The Killing Joke* might finally be given the movie treatment.

"This is the third time that it came up," Timm reveals. "We kind of looked at the whole thing. If we're going to do this, there are certain things about the original story that had always kind of bothered me. I mean, this story has always kind of terrified me – doing an adaptation of it – from the very first time, because of the nature of the story, but just because there's certain aspects of it. It's just knowing how relentlessly grim it is, and what happens to Barbara Gordon in the story is very controversial to this day. It's that classic quote-unquote women in the refrigerator scenario."

The Barbara Gordon storyline has been hugely expanded upon, and for all the fears, there was a lot of excitement from Mark Hamill and Kevin Conroy, who have become the definitive voices of the Joker and Batman. "I can't imagine how people are going to react, because I'm a *Killing Joke* purist," enthuses Hamill. "It is the Holy Grail of *Batman* stories, rightly or wrongly. I think they've done an incredible job of supplementing it with the Barbara Gordon material. Even that surprised me at how edgy and adult it was. This is not your father's *Batman*. I hope people understand when they say 'R', they mean it."

"Mark is a real maven about all this stuff," Conroy tells us. "He turned me

onto it a while ago. The part of it I loved so much was when I struggle with Joker. There's this intimate psychological struggle between Batman and Joker that is great. The struggle of Batman with evil and with wanting to reconcile himself to evil and to subdue evil, to save Joker."

It's Moore's portrayal of the Joker's relationship with his counterpart that keeps readers coming back. The idea that all that stands between sanity and madness is 'one bad day' gives both characters more depth without taking anything away from the villain's power. The same goes for the potential back story we're given for the character, a tragic tale that may or may not be true.

"One of the saving graces of *The Killing Joke*, one of the things that I always like about it, was that even though it gives supposedly the Joker's origin story, Alan Moore kind of hedged his bets by giving the Joker that line towards the end saying, 'Well, sometimes I remember it one way, sometimes I remember it another,'" explains Timm.

"It's a version of the Joker that's really harrowing to me," adds Hamill. "When he says, 'If I'm going to have a past, I'd prefer it to be multiple choice.' I agree with that. I think it takes a lot of the mystery to show who



he was before he was the Joker.

He's a pathological liar. I think he's one of those people that lies so much or lives in his own fantasy that he's not even sure if he's lying or telling the truth."

Hamill was determined to stay close to the text. "I was bringing the novel to the recording studios. It's very close, but in certain instances I would ask, 'Can I go back to this?' and I would read it right out of [the] book. I realised I had to stop doing that; I had to take a step back and say, 'Okay, now what if you read this script as if you'd never read it before?' And that's the approach I took."

"Love it or not, we felt we just needed to do a straight-up adaptation of it," adds Timm. "There's very little changed in it. Brian Azzarello, who wrote the script, did come up with a couple of sequences here and there which filled things out. It's so of a piece with the source material that a lot of times I forget: 'Oh yeah, that's not in the comics.'" 

Batman: The Killing Joke is available on DVD, Blu-ray and digital download now.



The film will explore more of Barbara Gordon's back story as Batgirl.



THE CONROY-HAMILL DREAM TEAM

Why Conroy and Hamill are the best Batman and Joker

Fans will tell you that the live-action stars of the *Batman* movies have done a good job, but if you really want to hear the best versions, you need Conroy and Hamill. From the animated series to the *Arkham Asylum* games, they have perfected these characters.

"We come from the theatre background, and in the theatre you have to be generous on stage with the other actors," suggests Conroy. "You have to throw the ball to the other actor and trust that the other actor will throw it back. People watch us together and they say, 'You guys turn into 12-year olds when you're in there together.' We just get to a very childlike trust. I know he brings out the best in me, and I think I bring out the best in him."

"It's like a marriage," adds Hamill. "It's finding the rhythms that make you whole. It sounds kind of corny, because there's the whole idea of the Joker and Batman completing each other. With Kevin, he's like somebody I've been in a band with all these years. He's so Batman to me."

The Killing Joke goes to great lengths to highlight the dual nature shared by Batman and the Joker.





SET VISIT

Killjoys



THE WARRANT IS ALL

SCIFINOW VISITS THE SET OF
KILLJOYS TO FIND OUT WHO
WILL BE SPOILING THE FUN IN
SEASON TWO...

WORDS
MICHAEL
SIMPSON

KILLJOYS

The Warrant Is All

K

ILLJOYS IS FAR FROM BEING A FAMILY SHOW, BUT IN THE SYFY SERIES' FIRST SEASON THE NOTION OF FAMILY PLAYED A

big part. This isn't going to change in Season Two, which arrives this autumn, according to star Luke Macfarlane.

"That's what's interesting with Season Two: what bonds us. We all have our outside lives, but we all come back, and it's like the family's back together."

The 'us' he refers to are interplanetary bounty hunters: brothers D'avin and John Jaqobis (Macfarlane and Aaron Ashmore) and their de facto leader, Dutch (Hannah John-Kamen). Nicknamed 'killjoys', they apprehend wanted fugitives named by their employers, the Reclamation Apprehension Coalition (RAC).

As RAC agents, John and Dutch have been a team for several years. In *Killjoys*' first season their friendship endured a difficult transition when they accepted D'avin into the fold. Ultimately, though, the bonds between the three became as tight as if Dutch also has Jaqobis genes. Hence, when D'avin was kidnapped in the Season One finale, it was Dutch who promised, "I will find you."

"We are incredibly geared to finding D'avin, I think Dutch even more so than John," Ashmore tells us when we visit the set during filming for Season Two. "She feels she put him in that danger, so our first priority is getting Dav back and finding out what happened to him."

At the start of the new season D'avin will be trying to learn why Khlyen (Rob Stewart) has taken him to the mysterious RAC facility known as Red 17. Khlyen, it seems, wants to bump up D'avin's RAC rating to Level 6, a legendary status that gives agents heightened strength and other abilities. The screaming that echoes through Red 17 in the Season One finale suggests that this is not a pleasant process. Macfarlane hints that his character gains something that helps him better understand what he brings to Dutch and John's platonic partnership.

"Obviously I'm a fighter and strong, but Dutch can beat up anybody, so how am I different?" Macfarlane asks. "John is the tech guy and her great friend. This year, D'avin has discovered what is special about him, and it's a big point where he figures out this thing that he now has makes him necessary to the group."

One of the biggest obstacles to D'avin's integration in Season One was the sexual tension between him and Dutch. Their attraction ultimately boiled over in a brief act of passion that ended violently when it triggered his memories of his dark past. As a result, the two won't be sleeping together again any time soon, but they ➤



Aaron Ashmore returns as John Jaqobis.



D'avin Jaqobis (Luke Macfarlane) and Fancy (Sean Baek) aren't happy with the upgrade terms for Level 6.



SET VISIT

Killjoys

➤ will be close in a different way. "In Season Two it's a deeper sort of intimacy that doesn't involve sex. Whether that's romance I don't know, but it's a different way to come to understand each other."

THE FIRST SEASON ALSO SHED LIGHT ON DUTCH'S CHECKERED HISTORY. ONE REVELATION WAS THAT KHYLEN TAUGHT HER HOW

to kill in cold blood when she was in a harem. In Season Two, Stewart suggests that we may discover more about what motivated him, and we could come to appreciate why the actor believes that the putative sociopath is protecting her rather than trying to cause her pain.

"There's still parts of Khlyen that I'm in the dark on," Stewart says. "I'm a fan of the show, and read the scripts like a 14-year-old nerd, so I think 'hurt' would be disingenuous of me to say. I would say 'help'. Even though I do everything horrible to her, it's a father-daughter relationship that's very complicated."

That view is echoed by John-Kamen. Coming into Season Two, Dutch wants rid of Khlyen, but she still needs an explanation for his cryptic warnings about an impending threat to the Quad, the region of space in which the killjoys operate. Early in Season Two she gets a different perspective on Khlyen's actions from an unexpected source, and starts to question her judgement of him.

"It's not as simple as she thought," John-Kamen reveals. "She can't just hate Khlyen, and it's not like we're going to get him or that I hate him for what he did. It's understanding that it's bigger than Dutch and Khlyen. It involves everyone. There's something bigger going on, and Dutch needs answers."

There are rumours that something might involve events outside the Quad. Doubtless it will overlap with the fallout from the feud between the royal families,



British actress Hannah John-Kamen returns as Dutch.

WE START THE FIRST SEASON WITH BANG, BANG – COOL GUNS, LOTS OF LEATHER, PEOPLE ENJOYING THEMSELVES

MICHELLE LOVRETTA

which came to a head in the finale. It's likely to involve the region's powerful military and commercial overlord, the Company. Regardless of who is pulling the strings, there will be more strains on the familial relationships.

"The course of the season is exploring both politically and in terms of the mythology what happens as a result of the cliffhanger," says the series' creator, Michelle Lovretta. "It is something we have always built to at the end of Season One with the intention of expanding, exploiting and having a lot of ripple effects for this year."

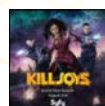
Those effects will force the killjoys to question the RAC's oath of neutrality as they realise they have to take responsibility for their role in shaping the world they live in. "The point for me is that we start the first season with bang, bang – cool guns, lots of leather, people

enjoying themselves," Lovretta explains. "They are not aware of the broader world that they are in, and in a weird way that's all of us."

With so much happening in the social and political circles, the series could easily lose its focus. Yet, as her previous show *Lost Girl*, proved, Lovretta is not a writer who gets caught up in the big picture. She promises that Season Two will again prioritise the effect of events on personal relationships.

"The core part of every story that I want to tell is real people," says Lovretta.

In other words, *Killjoys* will continue to put family first. ☺



Killjoys Season Two will air on Syfy from 2 August.

LOST AND FOUND

Creator Michelle Lovretta on why she wanted *Killjoys* to steer clear of clichés and reflect diversity



© Getty

How much of you is in your main characters?

In *Lost Girl*, I am basically Kenzi. I have had people call me and say that they walk and talk

like me. In *Killjoys*, that's John Jaqobis. He's like all of us, but cooler and has better one-liners. But to me the loyal person, the side of the strong person, the person telling them you have gone too far, that's the person I'm ultimately casting as myself.

Are we seeing more female action heroines in genre TV?

I think we're seeing more women in power, but because of my tastes the strong woman is also the ass-kicking person. I don't think that's the only kind of person there is, and I would love to see more of that variety as well. But then I wouldn't get to shoot things, and I really want to shoot things!

Do you intentionally write strong women in lead roles?

For me ultimately it's sameness I want to push away from. If I were to see show after show of just strong woman, I would be like, "Let's have Simon and Simon again". You don't want to feel, as a storyteller, that you are held back by what they will believe in terms of the role or colour or gender of the person, that's all. You just want the liberty to say, "But why not this person, as I haven't seen that in a while?"

Both *Lost Girl* and *Killjoys* have prominent sex-positive characters. Are you sending a message?

I'm an intensely non-political person. When I tell a story it has to come from my heart, and I believe it has a kindness to it. There's a lot of science fiction and horror that comes from a place of darkness, and there's a lot of nihilism and I'm really chipper. I can't do that, and I don't want to watch that and make that, so often the people in my world have liberties, and I want to live in a world that grants those.

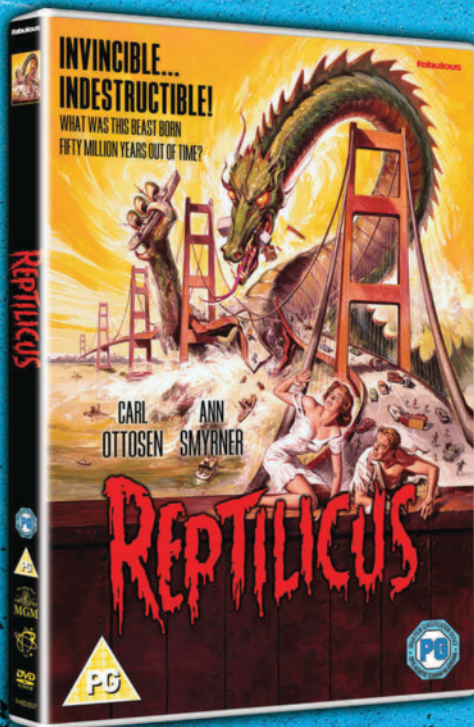
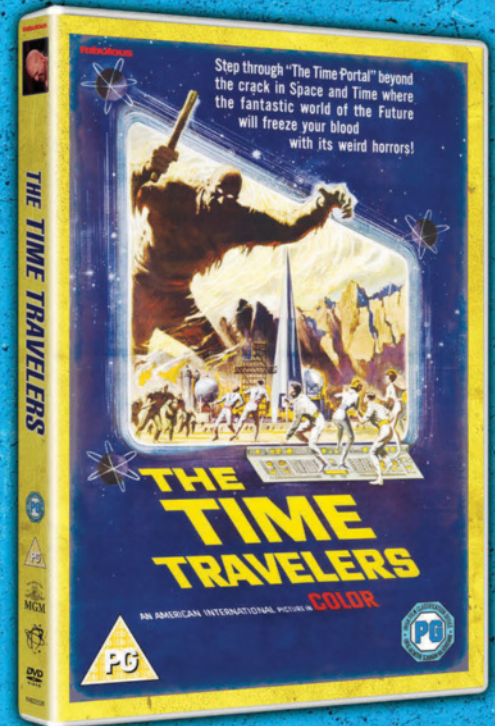
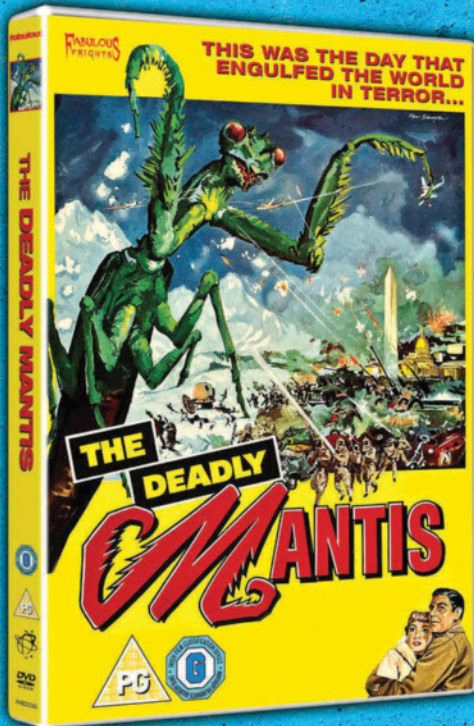


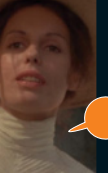
Pawter Simms (Sarah Power) has her hands full again this season.

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THE SIGN OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS

ARE WE IN A NEW GOLDEN AGE FOR AUSTRALIAN GENRE CINEMA, OR ARE FILMS LIKE THE BABADOOK AND WOLF CREEK FLASHES OF BRILLIANCE FOR AN INDUSTRY STILL LIVING IN THE MEMORY OF OZPLOITATION? WE TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT DRIVES AUSTRALIAN HORROR AND SCI-FI...

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL



THERE'S SOMETHING APPEALING ABOUT THE IDEA THAT A NATION HAS A SPECIFIC FILM GENRE, AND FEW COUNTRIES CAN LAY CLAIM TO SUCH A POWERFUL

cinematic identity as Australia. With Ozploitation and Australian Gothic, visions of wreckage-strewn tarmac and oppressively endless desert, killers on the road and spirits in the wilderness, post-colonial shame and fear of nature have been driven into our consciousness. From our remote viewpoint, we have a clear vision of what we think Australian genre cinema looks like.

Recently we've seen a few films making a huge global impact. *Wolf Creek* made us afraid of the Outback again, *The Babadook* showed us skin-crawling horror that starts at home, and *Mad Max: Fury Road* posited a reminder of who gave us the post-apocalypse in the first place. There have also been plenty of indie film sensations, such as *The Loved Ones*, *Observance* and *Wyrmuwood*. However, the question of whether or not these films constitute a revival is complicated.

"There's a lot of interest in Australian genre films internationally, but it's still an underdeveloped market domestically," opines Briony Kidd, filmmaker and creator of Tasmania's *Stranger With My Face* film festival. "I think that's changing slowly, with more distributors specialising in this area, a growing festival circuit, and with the funding agencies increasingly aware of the specific needs of these filmmakers."

"While the 'scene' from a broader industrial perspective is negligible – the attention of funding bodies in particular has historically privileged more highbrow 'serious' festival-friendly art films – filmmakers involved in making genre films here right now are thriving," agrees writer Alexandra Heller-Nicholas.

The Australian festival circuit seems to be going from strength to strength, with *Stranger With My Face*, Sydney's



Peter Weir's *Picnic At Hanging Rock* is arguably the best Australian Gothic film ever made.



Fantastic Planet and *A Night Of Horror*, Melbourne's Monster Fest and more offering opportunities for both film lovers and filmmakers. Canadian film scholar Kier-La Janisse has joined the Monster Fest team this year as Festival Director and Head Programmer, and she tells us that there are clear points of comparison in the two nations' genre movie histories.

"I feel the trajectory in Australia mirrors our own," she explains. "We had a 'golden age' in the Seventies and Eighties that resulted in a glut of exploitation and oddball indie films. Ours was due to the tax shelter, and Australia's was purportedly due to the founding of the Australian Film Television and Radio School, both situations that set the stage for more active production. A lot of the films that were made were seen as embarrassments by the powers that be. I think this resulted in more conservative mandates about the types of films that

WE'RE GETTING CLOSER TO DEPICTING ALL FACETS OF OUR IDENTITY
BRIONY KIDD

could get public funding, and so both countries had a bit of a slump because of this, and a general lack of pride in their national filmmaking."

Public funding from institutions like Screen Australia and regional bodies is a crucial element in Australian filmmaking, but gaining their support isn't always easy for genre filmmakers. "Traditionally, it's the be-all and end-all," Craig Anderson, writer-director of upcoming horror *Red Christmas*, tells us. "People hardly make a film here without them, and it's the first point of call when a filmmaker has an idea. Of course, if your idea is not the kind of idea they normally fund, then you usually shut down that idea immediately, like some kind of cultural Pavlovian conditioning." ➤



The landscape is powerful, bewitching and dangerous in Weir's work.

Mad Max: Fury Road offered colonial commentary amid the carnage.

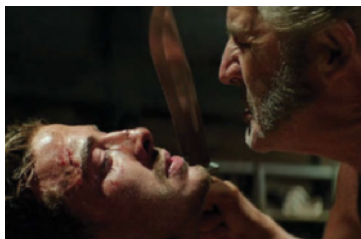
WOLF CREEK 2 WAS A SCATHING INDICTMENT ON WHITE AUSTRALIA'S UNCHECKED XENOPHOBIA

ALEXANDRA
HELLER-NICHOLAS

➤ The idea of fitting a film into an easily defined box also applies to how these films are seen and understood. Given that we have such a powerful love of Ozploitation classics like *Mad Max* and *Razorback*, and Australian Gothic masterpieces like *Picnic At Hanging Rock* and *Wake In Fright*, we wonder if they're still an influence on today's filmmakers.

"There's no doubt that many Australian filmmakers have been directly affected and/or shaped by the legacy of the Ozploitation era in one way or another," Toby Kidd, producer of upcoming sci-fi flick *Restoration*, tells us. "Whether they may feel comfortable admitting it or not."

"Critics are always going to look for patterns, so maybe they sometimes make leaps of logic and find connections that are not really there," opines Kidd. "But filmmakers are not creating in a vacuum. It's impossible to not be influenced by what you've seen and where you've



grown up. I do believe that horror in particular works well when it's infused with a strong sense of place." Kidd is particularly interested in Tasmanian Gothic, which draws on the region's specific history, location and landscape, and is becoming an increasingly visible influence on filmmakers. "The Gothic sensibility runs deep in Tasmania," agrees Janisse.

THAT LANDSCAPE IS OBVIOUSLY A HUGE PART OF WHAT WE THINK OF WHEN WE THINK OF AUSTRALIAN GENRE FILMS, AND WE'RE STILL SEEING PLENTY OF

filmmakers utilising it, from *The Rover* to the *Wolf Creek* saga, but some of the most powerful works of the last few years, such as *The Babadook* and *Observance*, brought their ideas indoors.

"In Australia we have a strong tradition of storytelling that engages with the landscape," Kidd tells us, "And our genre films have reflected that, particularly when it comes to talking about what scares us. I'd speculate then that it's a sign of maturity to see more films that don't

fit that mould. We're getting closer to depicting all facets of our identity, not just a few perspectives."

Stranger With My Face has a particular focus on female directors, and Heller-Nicholas sees it as an exciting time for female filmmakers. "I know that the quality and diversity of the films women are making here is extraordinary, as not just a woman Australian critic, but a horror film fan, I'm very proud of this!"

"Diversity, both in terms of the people who are getting a chance to make films and in terms of the styles and approaches adopted, can only be a good thing," adds Kidd.

And to suggest that these films are somehow less concerned with national identity and national issues would be a grievous error, as Heller-Nicholas explains. "I very strongly believe *The Babadook* and *Observance* – with their focus on domestic violence in particular, which has reached epidemic proportions here and is verging on a national emergency – have more to say about contemporary Australia than the seemingly endless parade of more highbrow, earnest material that gets the funding/accolades here," she enthuses.

And those two films aren't alone in addressing concerns about contemporary Australia. While *Wolf Creek 2* was full of Ozploitation references, it was a fierce social and political critique in slasher-movie wrapping paper. However, two prominent Australian critics simply refused to review the film. "It infuriates me that to critics overseas [the commentary] was so obvious, but so few critics here made that connection!" Heller-Nicholas tells us.

"I believe it was a scathing indictment on white Australia's rampant, increasing and unchecked xenophobia. Few critics here looked for any kind of subtext, even though it was quite explicit. What the Australian government is doing to asylum seekers on Nauru and Manus Island is something that horror is perfectly situated to critique and explore, and that it was so broadly ignored by critics here I think is representative of the old fashioned highbrow/lowbrow distinction that we should have grown out of a long time ago."

One film that was universally loved was George Miller's *Mad Max: Fury Road*, which may have been funded by Warner Bros, but is undoubtedly Australian. And while it rightly drew plaudits for its critique of our patriarchal society's treatment of women, Heller-Nicholas tells us that there is there is another important level of commentary that is aimed squarely at its home nation.

"Absolutely," she tells us. "*Fury Road* is fundamentally Australian, and its precise not-Australianness in fact feeds directly into a very crucial aspect of disenfranchised white national identity here right now, linked to a deep, defining



Greg Mclean's *Wolf Creek 2* is a fierce social critique in Ozploitation clothes.



The Babadook's domestic violence concerns are tremendously relevant.



Stuart Willis' Restoration is part of a new boom for Australian science fiction.

shame of Australia's violent past and violent present. The label 'un-Australian' has very specific social potency, and has been used by politicians as an attack; a kind of accusation of cultural treason. For this reason, many of us here have embraced it, even pride ourselves on it."

The film's international cast is key to this message. "It is cast by a range of actors from colonial backgrounds (South Africa, Australia, New Zealand), and the British 'hero' is effectively made redundant is a potent political statement in itself," Heller-Nicholas continues. "That Max (a white man very much representative of colonial power) has a dream at the start of the film where an Indigenous man accuses him for the state of the world that the film is set in (a world where there are no Indigenous people) is very telling. For me, *Fury Road* is not just dystopian, but explicitly post-genocidal."

The idea that these films are not being given the recognition they deserve for addressing these vital issues is troubling, and also a little confusing given that this is what Australian cinema has been doing for decades. "Just about every Aussie film attempts to address the 'empty' and often misunderstood landscape,"

explains Anderson. "There are so many colonial Aussie films that stare into our red void and tentatively shrug back, and our inappropriate relationship with the fauna is reflected in films like *Long Weekend*, *Razorback* and *Matilda The Boxing Kangaroo*. We also have a mixed relationship with crime – we know it's transgressive, but we also think that being a grubby rule-breaker is heroic."

FOR ANDERSON, THAT TRADITION IS STARTING TO FEEL LIKE A SET OF RESTRICTIONS. "NOW, I FEEL LIKE WE ARE LIKE A RECORD SKIPPING BACKWARDS,"

he continues, "Generating new films, but still thematically addressing them in the same way, with the same assumptions, tone and style. Perhaps that is what defines our filmmaking, or maybe we're stuck in an enforced cultural quandary, held back by the aging funding bodies."

For all the frustration, there is so much promise. With festivals celebrating new Australian filmmakers and dedicating projects to helping young talent, there is a feeling that the genre community is growing and strengthening.

"Genre" used to be a dirty word here," *Restoration* director Stuart Willis tells us. "But that's begun to fade. There's still work to be done. The phrase 'elevated genre' gets thrown around a lot, and most of the time I think people use it to mean to genre films that you can talk about at dinner parties or not be embarrassed that you helped finance. Genre can and should be more than that. If we ever get James Wan making a horror film in Australia then I'd be really happy!"

"I have seen horror filmmakers go out of their way to provide advice, networking leads and other vital information to each other in a really supportive spirit," Heller-Nicholas adds. "There is certainly an upswing," agrees Janisse. "I think festivals like *Stranger With My Face* are big instigators of that – or at least motivating factors – combined with the success of films like *The Babadook*, Mark Hartley's films, and powerhouse genre writers like Alexandra Heller-Nicholas fuelling things further. There's definitely a lot going on, and you can feel that it's gonna get even bigger." ☺

Monster Fest runs from 24-27 November in Melbourne. Visit www.monsterfest.au for more details. For more details about *Stranger With My Face*, visit www.strangerwithmyface.com. Craig Anderson's *Red Christmas* will play at Horror Channel FrightFest on 29 August. For more information on *Restoration*, visit www.restorationfilm.com.

AUSTRALIAN AND OVERLOOKED

Five genre classics you may have missed

CELIA (1988)

Highly recommended by Kidd and Heller-Nicholas, this was a huge influence on *The Babadook* and a powerful tale of a troubled young girl edging towards the brink.



SMOKE 'EM IF YOU GOT 'EM (1988)

This post-punk apocalypse movie has just been restored and re-released in Australia, and we demand the same edition here.



BEDEVIL (1993)

This three-part horror anthology was made entirely by director Tracey Moffatt, and is ripe for reappraisal given how many anthology movies are out there.



THE LAST WAVE

Peter Weir is one of Australian cinema's true masters, and this mystery, about a lawyer drawn into an Aboriginal community, is overlooked.



THIRST (1979)

Rod Hardy's blend of Elizabeth Báthory and *Soylent Green* finds a young married woman indoctrinated into a vampiric cult.



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SciFiNow Reviews

Our thoughts on the pick
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TOP 10s Read our lists relating to our favourite genre shows, and give your thoughts on whether we were right

AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE EIGHT OR MORE...

SciFiNow
Must
see now!

STAR TREK BEYOND

"BIG AND LOUD, BUT ALSO HAS A HEART"

TRIVIA JUSTIN LIN TOOK THE DIRECTOR'S SEAT FOR *STAR TREK BEYOND* AHEAD OF THE LIKES OF DUNCAN JONES, EDGAR WRIGHT AND RUPERT WYATT.

FILM INFO

Released

Out now

Certificate

12A

Director

Justin Lin

Screenwriters

Simon Pegg, Doug Jung

Cast

Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Zoe Saldana, John Cho, Simon Pegg, Karl Urban, Anton Yelchin, Idris Elba

Distributor

Paramount Pictures

Running Time

120 mins



STAR TREK BEYOND

To infinity and beyond

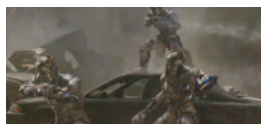
AREA 51

Alien armies we wouldn't want to pick a fight with...



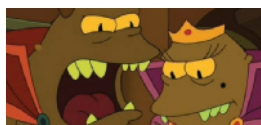
The Daleks (Doctor Who)

As far as *Doctor Who* villains go, the Daleks are proper bastards. The only way we'd dare go up against them in a dark alley is if we were with the Cybermen.



The Chitauri (Avengers Assemble)

When the Chitauri come for your city, you might as well just get in your car and drive. Nothing is surviving their mass destruction, especially when Loki is the ringleader.



The Omicronians (Futurama)

Not as menacing as the rest, but they're funny and weird, and they poop candy. If you're going to be killed by aliens, why not these guys?

When the first posters for *Star Trek Beyond* started popping up on the internet, we were pleasantly surprised. In contrast to *Into Darkness*' gritty, modernised promotional material, *Beyond* kept the emphasis on colour, adventure and fun. They were almost like a throwback to *Star Trek: The Original Series*. Thankfully, this feeling also shines through in the actual film. It's big, fun, emotional and action-packed – just as it should be.

It sounds kind of cheesy, but it's obvious that Simon Pegg and Doug Jung's script has come from a place of love. It's unclear whether this will be the last film in the rebooted series – a fourth is currently listed for 2019, though we await further news after recent events – but we wouldn't be disappointed if it was. There's just something about it – particularly during the third act – that feels so final, like a grandparent inviting their loved ones to their deathbed to crack out the photo albums and reminisce about the good old days. Thankfully, it's not as morbid as that. It takes real care when paying tribute to the expanded *Star Trek* universe, but it's neither subtle nor too sentimental; it's just right.



If there was something missing from the first two films that made them feel a little un-*Star Trek*-ish – between all the original sound effects and character names – it was the fact that characters that weren't Kirk (Chris Pine), Spock (Zachary Quinto), Uhura (Zoe Saldana) or Scotty (Pegg) didn't seem to have much personality. That wasn't down to the cast, though; it was more to do with the fact that none of them appeared to have much screen time when they weren't pressing buttons and flipping switches for Kirk on the Bridge.

Fortunately, *Star Trek Beyond* takes care of that. Sulu (John Cho) steps up his game as Lieutenant, Bones (Karl Urban) gets even sassier, and Chekov (Anton Yelchin) never fails to find someone to flirt with. Even the smallest instances of humour and compassion go a long way in transforming them from almost blank slates into fully realised action characters.

However, there's also a disappointing lack of Uhura. She's present for most of the film, but rarely does anything other than pine after Spock and look worried. It's difficult to tell whether her uncharacteristic passivity is the result of Saldana's hectic schedule or if Uhura just passed Pegg and Jung by, but either way it's a real shame.

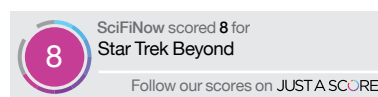
A new adventure happily leads to new partnerships, the best easily being Spock and Bones, who get lumped together by accident when the crew is forced to abandon ship. The result of the combination of Spock's deadpan, logical approach to

life and Bones' irritable, wisecracking personality is exactly what you'd expect. It's fun, entertaining and extremely welcome. Likewise, Kirk and Chekov are together when they leave the Enterprise, and quickly prove to make a good team, while Sulu and Uhura are left to lead the rest of the crew and keep them out of harm's way.

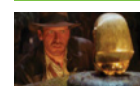
Scotty finds himself paired with his new friend Jaylah (Sofia Boutella), a kick-ass alien mechanic who he runs into while attempting to abandon ship. As far as the *Star Trek* reboots' original characters go, she's pretty awesome. Weirdly, the film's other new character, ruthless commander Krall, isn't as memorable as you would expect a villain played by Idris Elba to be, but he's menacing and gets the job done.

It may have flaws, but *Star Trek Beyond* is rooted so deeply into everything we love about *Star Trek* and the ideas behind it that it's difficult not to love it too. For two hours, it effortlessly switches from fun and thrilling to goofy and emotional. It's big and loud, but also has a heart, which is all we could have asked for.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Raiders Of The Lost Ark
Renowned archaeologist Indiana Jones explores strange new worlds and seeks out new life and civilisations.



PETE'S DRAGON Here be...

Details PG // TBC // 12 August **Director** David Lowery **Screenwriters** David Lowery, Toby Halbrooks **Cast** Bryce Dallas Howard, Oakes Fegley, Wes Bentley, Karl Urban, Oona Laurence and Robert Redford **Distributor** Disney



The 1977 original definitely wasn't Disney on top form, but this 2016 'reimagining' of the orphan boy-meets-dragon tale certainly doesn't set the screen alight. Gone is the pink mop-topped clumsy cartoon character that a lot of people remember fondly, and in its place a furry CGI dog-beast that's neither as cool as Falkor nor as fun as a Jim Henson creation.

Also absent are the corny songs. But it does seem that as Disney continues its mission to monetise their back-catalogue by updating old classics, they're losing the innocence and magic from the original stories – two things that we surely need more of in these testing times?

For a family film, this starts off with one heck of a gut-punch as we witness how young Pete (Oakes Fegley) becomes an orphan: we're talking *Bambi*-scale trauma here, you have been warned! When he meets the dragon they become firm friends and live a charmed solitary existence until the lumber industry encroaches on their patch of forest, and Pete is yanked back into a sceptical human world where he's forced to eat jam sandwiches.

In a film where 90 per cent of the acting consists of being awed by something off-camera, Fegley manages to hold our attention by being both endearing and slightly



feral. However, aside from comedy and charm, what's lacking is a convincing villain. The creepy hillbilly family and travelling medicine man from the original movie have been replaced by Karl Urban's (*Star Trek*) 'nemesis-lite'.

What it does have is plenty of well-worn, though well-meaning, parables for all generations of cinema-goers to consider – but if you're looking for a man vs nature tale, go to Studio Ghibli, or for a logic vs magic story check out *The Flight Of Dragons*. With this new *Pete's Dragon*, Disney has sadly forgone fantasy and frivolity for realism. There's magic in the woods if you know where to look for it; you just won't find it in this film.

Nadia Attia

SciFiNow scored **5** for **Pete's Dragon**
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Where the Wild Things Are
Spike Jonze brings the book to life with wit and charm.



K-SHOP Cheeky kebab, anyone?

Details 18 // 115 mins // Out now **Director** Dan Pringle **Screenwriter** Dan Pringle **Cast** Ziad Abaza, Scot Williams, Kristin Atherton, Reece Noi, Darren Morfitt **Distributor** Bulldog Films



With its 'Sweeney Todd in a kebab shop' pitch, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Dan Pringle's feature debut

would be a knockabout, gross-out horror comedy. While there is plenty of human flesh being ground up and served in Styrofoam containers, and more than a few dark chuckles, *K-Shop* plays things relatively straight, delivering an unexpectedly grounded and relevant psychological thriller.

Sociology student Salah (Ziad Abaza) is helping out at his ailing dad's Bournemouth kebab shop. When his father dies in an altercation with some aggressive drunk customers, Salah takes over the business and confronts a never-ending stream of pissed-up, abusive and frequently bigoted diners. When one of these hungry people accidentally ends up with their head in the deep fat fryer, Salah hits upon an idea.

Sweeney Todd may be the inspiration for the concept, but Pringle is clearly more influenced by vigilante movies like *Taxi Driver* and *Death Wish*.



Although there's some B-movie fun to be had in seeing abusive racists being turned into doner meat and obnoxious bastards fed the result, *K-Shop* doesn't settle into such a simplistic 'You are what you eat' narrative.

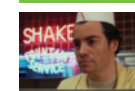
Instead, the film works hard to avoid becoming simplistic, and instead make us question our sympathies. Shortly after Salah begins his new cooking programme, questions are raised about the boozy culture that profits from people getting out of their minds every weekend, while our protagonist's treatment of his victims shows that dehumanisation is an easy trap to fall into. Anchoring all of this is a superb performance from Abaza, who has to walk a very fine line, and does so with great confidence and skill.

While it is too long at 115 minutes, and at least one of the subplots is unnecessary, Pringle's careful approach means that a lot of the more ambitious social commentary works: the abuse that Salah is confronted with does feel very relevant in our country's current situation, as do the scenes of drunken violence. This is a very promising debut.

Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **7** for **K-Shop**
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Some Guy Who Kills People
This horror comedy stars an ice cream man who might be a murderer.



INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

Oh my god, they're back again

Details 12A // 120 mins // Out now **Director** Roland Emmerich **Cast** Jeff Goldblum, Liam Hemsworth, Bill Pullman, Jessie T Usher, William Fichtner, Maika Monroe
Distributor 20th Century Fox



It has been 20 years since aliens blew up the White House, but Roland Emmerich's sequel to his much-loved, green shit-shooting behemoth is very much stuck in the past.

In a slightly alternate present in which alien tech has allowed us to create gravity-defying aircraft and build a military installation on the Moon, David Levinson (Jeff Goldblum) is in Africa investigating why a downed alien craft's lights have turned back on, and realises that its distress call has been answered. Suddenly, an Atlantic-spanning alien craft has arrived, and humanity's taking its last stand. Again.

Plot-wise, it's the same film. However, for those who of us who have seen the original, there's a warm sense of nostalgia as the film begins and reveals itself to be exactly the same shade of silly, and Emmerich and co lean on that heavily. Will Smith's absence is absolutely felt, but Goldblum, Bill Pullman, Brent Spiner and Judd Hirsch are all back.

However, Goldblum is positioned in the slightly awkward role of elder

statesman, and only really sparkles when he's allowed to have some fun. Pullman, on the other hand, does get to barrel about unpredictably.

Meanwhile, the new additions are mostly awful. Liam Hemsworth's maverick fighter pilot is the film's nominal lead, and he's mostly fine, but every single character that has been brought in to add humour isn't funny (Hemsworth's BFF character is particularly heinous).

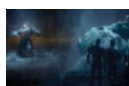
However, Emmerich can still deliver spectacle. "It's definitely bigger than the last one," is the film's refrain, and it is hard not to get swept up in the excitement of the action, or be giddily entertained by the filmmaker's determination to bring in moments of pure silliness: school buses, tiny dogs and pee jokes. It's often hard to tell whether you're giggling with the film or at it, but you will be giggling.

So it's stuck in the Nineties, and that's a problem, but it's also its most redeeming feature. It's certainly not a great film, but it's definitely an *Independence Day* sequel. For all its many, many flaws, it's kind of fun.

Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **5** for *Independence Day: Resurgence*
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

OR STAY IN AND WATCH



Pacific Rim
Guillermo del Toro's monster mash is deliciously silly, but also brilliant.

THE CHILDHOOD OF A LEADER

History begins at home

Details TBC // 115 mins // 19 August **Director** Brady Corbet **Cast** Bérénice Bejo, Liam Cunningham, Robert Pattinson **Distributor** Metrodome



"This has happened before, and it will continue to happen again and again."

In 1919, journalist Charles (Robert Pattinson) discusses World War One with the Father (Liam Cunningham) in a villa outside Paris. There, the Father bullies his younger polyglot wife (Bérénice Bejo) and their son Prescott (Tom Sweet), and misbehaves with Prescott's tutor Ada (Stacy Martin) – when he is not in Paris helping Wilson's team draft the Versailles treaty. Notoriously, it would end one global conflict, only to sow the seeds for the next. Here, history is doomed to repeat itself.

In his feature debut as director and co-writer (with partner Mona Fastvold), actor Brady Corbet (*Thunderbirds*) confines momentous global events of 20th-century history to the background, while focusing instead on the parallel conflicts in this household.

In the middle is Prescott, sexually uncertain, caught between cultures and absorbing lessons in adult conduct. As Prescott acts out, his mother, instructed to reimpose order by her absent husband, treats both the troubled boy and her staff in increasingly dictatorial fashion.

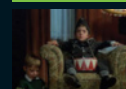


The film is a domestic tragedy that is also a parable of politics and power. His formative childhood is glimpsed as a series of elliptical impressions, leaving viewers with an enigmatic mosaic that they must piece together for themselves, guided minimally by the film's title and occasional chapter headings.

Meanwhile, Scott Walker's extraordinary soundtrack keeps all these disparate scenes driving ever forwards with great intensity to their bleak alt-history future. It's an adult film about Europe's (and the world's) permanent pre-adolescence.

Anton Bitel

OR STAY IN AND WATCH



The Tin Drum
A magical realist allegory in which young Oskar's refusal to grow up frames Nazism's rise and fall.

SciFiNow scored **8** for *The Childhood Of A Leader*
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**



SciFiNow
Must see now!

FILM INFO

Released

Out now

Certificate

12A

Director

Paul Feig

Screenwriters

Paul Feig,

Katie Dippold

Cast

Kristen Wiig, Melissa McCarthy, Leslie Jones, Kate McKinnon, Chris Hemsworth

Distributor

Columbia Pictures

Running Time

116 mins



NEW YORK OR BUST

Films that destroyed New York completely

Deep Impact (1998)

That tidal wave didn't just destroy New York; it took out most of the planet.



Independence Day (1996)

Alien death lasers were the downfall of the city here. Also fire. Lots of fire.

Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs (2009)

Having your hometown flooded with hot dogs and bagels is not a bad way to go.

The 5th Wave (2016)

One of the five waves was an actual wave, which left devastation in its wake.

Planet Of The Apes (1968)

A nuclear holocaust put the Statue of Liberty in the sea in the film's twist ending.



GHOSTBUSTERS

Making bustin' feel good again

Trailers for Paul Feig films have a track record of being underwhelming, but there's a reason: as Feig explains it, a comedy film is like a table in a restaurant occupied by a group of friends that know and love each other, that drink together and howl with laughter together while having the best night of their lives.

The trailer for said comedy film is a table-for-one at the other side of the restaurant, eating alone and silently wanting to kill those unfunny clowns who are making too much noise. Table-for-one wants to stab its fork into the eyeballs of those at the fun table across the room. As soon as the film starts, Feig is tasked with moving the audience from the loser table to the fun table as fast as possible.

With *Ghostbusters*, we're at the fun table. It goes without saying, but let's say it anyway: people needn't have got so worked up about that trailer. Think of the things mankind could have achieved if all the energy that went into clicking the dislike button on YouTube was put into something more lasting or worthwhile. We could have fed almost a million dogs on that click-to-give-a-dog-a-bowl-of-food website.

The film's strongest assets are easily its characters and insanely talented cast.

Kristen Wiig's university professor, Erin Gilbert, gets the ball rolling by instigating the whole thing. She plays it straighter than some of her co-stars, but she's still extremely engaging and entertaining. Melissa McCarthy's Abby Yates is loud and obnoxious at times, but she has a good heart and sense of humour, and Leslie Jones' subway worker, Patty Tolan, is smart and brave, stepping into a world she knows nothing about and taking it in her stride.

If the film had to have an MVP, however, it would be Kate McKinnon's zany nuclear physicist Jillian Holtzmann. The *Saturday Night Live* star consistently steals scenes to the point where it's difficult to focus on anyone else when she's on screen, as she effortlessly turns goofy sound effects and facial expressions into punchlines.

As a unit, the four of them are bloody hilarious. They are a perfect example of an ensemble cast actually having chemistry, as opposed to being a bunch of people that

were thrown together, given lines and told to look like they like each other.

Chris Hemsworth's Kevin, the Ghostbusters' secretary, is also worth a mention, as he's kind of genius. The character himself isn't that likeable – he's a selfish, absent-minded imbecile – but he's fascinating. Hemsworth plays him almost deadpan, which seems like a weird choice on paper considering all the other characters' personalities, but he hits the comedy mark every time.

As far as gags go, some are weirdly placed, and others feel rushed in order to make room for bigger but inferior gags, and some of the louder laughs come from throwaway comments that should have had more of a spotlight. But as a whole, Dippold and Feig's script is tight, fast-paced and frequently laugh-out-loud funny.

What it comes down to is if you like the cast and the director then you'll most likely dig *Ghostbusters*. If you don't then you won't, so don't waste your money and, subsequently, your time complaining about it on the internet. Spend your money and your time on things you do like instead. However, if you're feeling a sense of smug achievement about not liking a film you didn't think you would like, you should confront those feelings and ask yourself what they're actually about.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



SciFiNow scored **8** for *Ghostbusters*

Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Zombieland
A group of apocalypse survivors hunt the undead in this irreverent comedy horror.

FILM INFO

Released

Out now

Certificate

18

Director

Nicolas Winding Refn

Screenwriters

Nicolas Winding Refn, Mary Laws, Polly Stenham

Cast

Elle Fanning, Jena Malone, Karl Glusman, Bella Heathcote, Abbey Lee, Alessandro Nivola, Keanu Reeves, Christina Hendricks

Distributor

Icon

Running Time

118 mins



THE NEON DEMON

Fashion beast

SciFiNow
Must
see now!



BOO! BOO!

Great genre films that got panned at Cannes

Only God Forgives (2013)

Refn seems to enjoy his films kicking up a fuss at Cannes, and the reaction to his gruesome, stylish and brilliant Thai-set gangster film is the peak of that. Speaking of Ryan Gosling...

Lost River (2014)

It's easy to see why Gosling's directorial debut split opinion, but there's certainly nothing worth booing. It's an ambitious and beautifully shot urban fairy tale that wears its influences on its sleeve.

Antichrist (2009)

Lars von Trier's horror film is absolutely brilliant. It's also graphically violent, with terrible things happening to Willem Dafoe and Charlotte Gainsbourg's genitals, which may explain the booing.

Twin Peaks:

Fire Walk With Me (1992)

Everyone loves *Twin Peaks*, with its balance of light and dark. A lot of people emphatically did not like the film prequel, which is gorgeously shot, thematically challenging and pitch black.

"I can make money off of pretty," announces Elle Fanning's aspiring young model Jesse near the start of *The Neon Demon*. Although not the film's mantra (that's "Beauty isn't everything. It's the only thing," as uttered by Alessandro Nivola's cruel designer), Jesse's confidence that her looks will take her all the way is mirrored in Nicolas Winding Refn's latest feature.

Accusing the film of being shallow as if that's somehow happened by accident is missing the point: Refn has created a gorgeous, seductive and hypnotic vision of Los Angeles that draws the viewer in with the same confidence, style and provocation as the fashion industry does. The director of *Drive* and *Only God Forgives* is more than capable of delivering a stunning sensory experience, and luxuriates in getting shocked people talking. There are moments in which you can almost hear him giggling; it is most definitely a Nicolas Winding Refn film.

Jesse's journey sticks fairly closely to the traditional 'rise to fame' narrative, as she shakes off her fears and the people who helped her. However, Refn and his co-writers, Mary Laws and Polly Stenham, are never really

interested in letting us get to know her. She's young, beautiful and has no family. She's got to navigate this dangerous territory on her own, but she's tougher than she looks.

We're never given a reason to doubt that Jesse can make it to the top. Every meeting is a success, every shoot a triumph, and every artist a giddy recipient of a new muse. She's "a diamond in a sea of glass", but her arrival ruffles the feathers of established models Sarah (Abbey Lee) and Gigi (Bella Heathcote). The former is on the verge of being yesterday's news, while the latter has undergone so much cosmetic surgery that she's been nicknamed 'The Bionic Woman'. Only make-up artist Ruby (Jena Malone) seems to be interested in Jesse's well being, but is her attention entirely benign?

There's not a lot of 'benign' here. Being a Refn film, everything is heightened, including cruelty. The early "Who's she fucking?" barbs of the first meeting of models recall Paul Verhoeven's *Showgirls*,

but the film's vision of the beauty industry is fierce. An early scene shows Jesse responding rapturously to a faceless figure being dangled in a strobe-lit space, and sure enough, for the photographers and designers Jesse is something between a marionette, a mannequin and a sex object. The way in which the rest of the world sees her beauty is shown to be either romantically delusional, in the case of her 'not really' boyfriend Dean (Karl Glusman), or dangerously lascivious, in the case of her pervy motel manager (Keanu Reeves). And, as it keeps reminding us, she's only 16.

With these cold, brutal and unsettling themes at play, Refn and cinematographer Natasha Braier do incredible work of bringing this world to life, stranding Jesse in light and dark spaces before introducing pulsing neon colour and drawing the inevitable comparisons with Mario Bava and David Lynch. Completed by Cliff Martinez's amazing score, it's a glorious treat for the senses. There's also a rich seam of dark humour at play that goes beyond Refn enjoying showing you something disgusting, aided by a game cast.

It's a little overlong, and a lot of viewers may find themselves feeling a little queasy for several reasons, but this is a powerful cinematic experience that Refn fans should absolutely treat themselves to.

Jonathan Hatfull

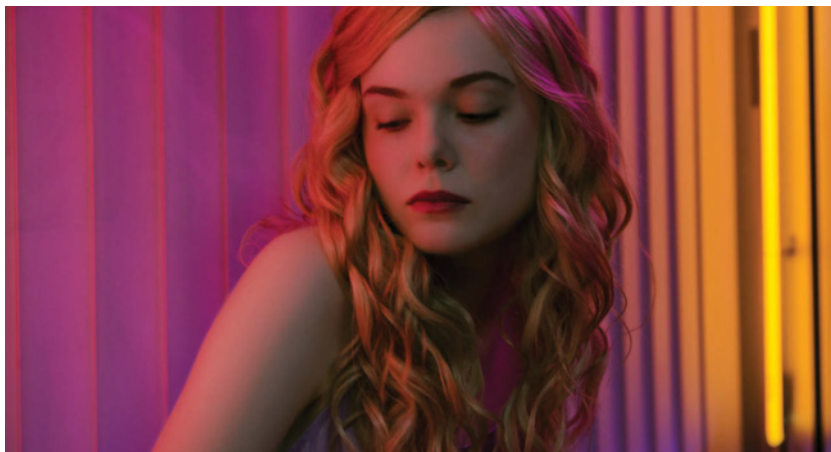
SciFiNow scored **8** for
The Neon Demon

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Blood And Black Lace
Refn loves Mario Bava, and this beautiful giallo about murdered models is a clear influence.



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BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

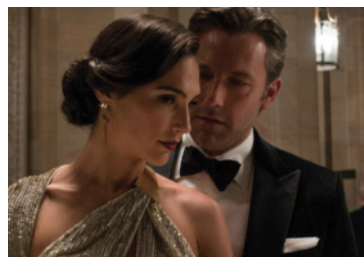
Darkest before the yawn

Details 12 // 151 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** 1 August **Director** Zack Snyder
Cast Ben Affleck, Henry Cavill, Amy Adams, Jesse Eisenberg, Diane Lane, Laurence Fishburne, Jeremy Irons, Holly Hunter, Gal Gadot **Distributor** Warner Home Video



If your film's effects and fight sequences are abnormally over the top, it's possible to scatter them throughout the rest

of the film to hide the fact that there's not really anything else to it. However, *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice* has the opposite effect. The fact that all the fights are saved until the last third of the film just highlights how boring and lack-lustre the rest of it is.



It wastes no time getting to the story, starting with the battle that devastated *Man Of Steel*, but even the rubble and dramatic revenge-faces from Bruce Wayne (Ben Affleck) aren't enough to make it interesting. The film starts to dip and wobble all over the place until you're not even sure you can be bothered to sit through all 151 minutes.

It's not all bad though. Touches of humour go a long way in some of the bleaker scenes, and Hans Zimmer and Junkie XL's thrilling score never fail to lift the mood. Although many of the dull characters can be easily tossed aside, the film seems to have found an excellent player in Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman. Her appearances are scarce, but just her presence can single-handedly take a scene from a 2 to an 8. No matter what happens with the rest of the DC Extended Universe, we can at



least be certain that Gadot was the right choice for the Amazonian warrior.

It's a little worrying that this is the film that was supposed to launch Wonder Woman, Aquaman and the rest of the Justice League, but with its huge cast and crew and even bigger budget, it's a bit late to go back now.

However, it still makes sense that *BVS* did well at the box office. With all the criticism, both film and DC fans alike were eager to see what the fuss was all about. If this one film is any reflection on those that are coming over the next four years, Warner Bros will be looking at the big bucks, even if those big bucks are entirely unsatisfying.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



SciFiNow scored **5** for *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

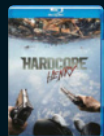


The Dark Knight
Remember the *Batman* magic with arguably one of the best Caped Crusader movies ever made.

HARDCORE HENRY

The best videogame you've never played

Details 18 // 96 mins // 2016 // **DVD** • **iTunes** // **Released** 1 August
Director Ilya Naishuller **Cast** Sharlto Copley, Haley Bennett, Danila Kozlovsky, Tim Roth **Distributor** Entertainment in Video



With Timur Bekmambetov (*Wanted*) on producer duties and with a title like *Hardcore Henry*,

it's fair to point out a work of high art isn't on the cards. Partly crowd-funded and shot using GoPros attached to modified face masks worn by stunt performers, Naishuller's directorial debut at first looks about as enjoyable as watching a buddy play a first-person shooter. Yet its punky attitude and energy is cinematic.

Aided by a wheelchair-bound scientist with a range of wacky avatars (all played by Sharlto Copley doing his best impersonation of Peter Sellers), cyborg soldier Henry must stop a telekinetic megalomaniac (Danila Kozlovsky) from taking over the

world. The plot is B-grade trash, but Naishuller's staging of non-stop thrills and screen carnage is at times breathtaking.

A film Paul Verhoeven might have once made, falling somewhere between deranged and inspired, *Hardcore Henry* is a riot of pure action spectacle.

Martyn Conterio

SciFiNow scored **6** for *Hardcore Henry*
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**



TALE OF TALES

Forget Disney; these are horror tales

Details 15 // 133 mins // 2015 // **DVD** • **iTunes** • **bluetooth** // **Released** 8 August
Director Matteo Garrone **Cast** Salma Hayek, Vincent Cassel, John C Reilly, Toby Jones **Distributor** Curzon Artificial Eye



A barren queen uses black magic to conceive a child. A horny king marries an old crone disguised as a great beauty. An ogre wins a princess, after her father holds a bizarre competition. Matteo Garrone's English-language debut is a visually sumptuous, dark-hearted fairy-tale triptych led by an international cast.

Inspired by Giambattista Basile's *Pentamerone*, a 17th century collection of morality stories with fantasy themes, *Tale Of Tales* is a baroque marvel equally informed by horror auteur, Mario Bava. Garrone's decision to shoot at stunning real-life locations, but photographing them to look like film sets, weaves a vital sense of movie magic and stylised artificiality. *Tale Of Tales* also forgoes CGI, bar the occasional



scene, instead opting for old-school practical effects. It pays off major creative dividends.

Vincent Cassel's hilarious, scenery-chewing performance as a permanently randy monarch, whose insatiable lust for female flesh leads him down an unknowing path, is also a highlight.

Martyn Conterio

SciFiNow scored **8** for *Tale of Tales*
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**



10 CLOVERFIELD LANE Don't go upstairs

Details 12 // 104 mins // 2016 //  **Released** Out now **Director** Dan Trachtenberg **Cast** Mary Elizabeth Winstead, John Goodman, John Gallagher Jr **Distributor** Paramount Home Entertainment



Nabbing the title was a little cheeky. Let's be honest – this doesn't really have anything to do with *Cloverfield*. But

if that's what it took to get this made then that's fine by us, as it remains one of the best movies of the year.

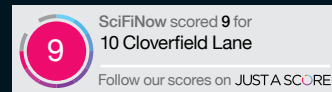
While it keeps its cards to its chest regarding the existence of literal monsters, the metaphorical ones are bad enough, and here we have one of the scariest in recent memory: John Goodman's Howard.

Even before the extent of his mania becomes evident, he

dominates the screen with sinister, humourless guile. Add in John Gallagher Jr's abrasive Emmett and Mary Elizabeth Winstead's confused Michelle, and the situation is a tinder box waiting to ignite.

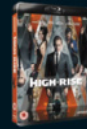
When it finally does it's a sight to see, and even before that it's hard to take your eyes off it. It may not be what we expected, but it's definitely better than we could have hoped for.

Steve Wright



HIGH-RISE Lord Of The Skies

Details 15 // 119 mins // 2015 //  **Released** Out now **Director** Ben Wheatley **Cast** Tom Hiddleston, Jeremy Irons, Sienna Miller, Luke Evans, Elisabeth Moss **Distributor** Studiocanal

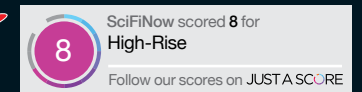


Dr Robert Laing (Tom Hiddleston) moves out of the city into a first-rate luxury high-rise, looking for peace and quiet and a taste of the good life, but things start to spiral into madness when he tries to get to know his neighbours. It's not long before a class war breaks out, and the residents of the tower block start turning against each other. What was once civilised society becomes all-out anarchy.

For many, *High-Rise* will be unlike anything you've seen before. However, it takes a while to gauge whether or not that's a good thing. The tone is set from the very first scene, when we see Laing in on the balcony of a grubby apartment, eating a dog off a spit roast. From there, it only gets grimmer and grimmer.

The cast, which includes Jeremy Irons as a cruel but esteemed architect, Luke Evans as an aspiring working class director and Elisabeth Moss as Evans' heavily pregnant wife, pull the film together, and Ben Wheatley's stylish direction creates something that you'll not only ponder, but drool over.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



THE MERMAID Flippin' genius

Details 15 // 94 mins // 2016 //  **Released** Out now **Director** Stephen Chow **Cast** Chao Deng, Yun Lin, Show Luo, Yuqi Zhang **Distributor** Sony Pictures Home Entertainment



People familiar with Stephen Chow's other work like *Shaolin Soccer*, *Kung Fu Hustle* and *Journey To The West* will most

likely get exactly what they are expecting with *The Mermaid*. From the very first scene – in which the owner of an oddity museum tries to hoodwink a group of unconvinced tourists that what they are seeing are shrunken dinosaurs and mermaids rather than stuffed geckos and a man in a bathtub – this is absolutely bonkers, and remains so throughout.

However, it still has some substance behind it; *The Mermaid* is something of an eco-fable. The story starts when playboy business tycoon Liu Xuan (Chao Deng) treats himself to the Green Gulf wildlife reserve and subsequently uses sonar technology to clear it of all sea life. But unknown to Liu, the Green Gulf is also home to a group of merpeople that are getting sick – or worse – because of the frequent sonar

pulses. Not wanting to lose more of their people, the merfolk plot to assassinate Liu, and send mermaid Shan (Yun Lin) to seduce and murder him before things get any worse.

After undergoing human training – which involves hiding her tail with a maxi skirt and learning to walk upright with trainers on her fins – Shan infiltrates Liu's hotel. But the mission ends up being harder than first thought when she starts to develop feelings for her target.

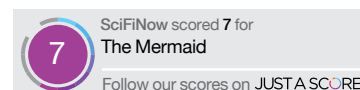
Although we only spend 90 minutes with them, the characters waste no time in getting under your skin. The entire cast is hilarious, and the fun they are clearly having radiates to the audience. The special effects, though eye-catching, are kind of shoddy, but to be honest that just enhances the viewing experience. It's like you're laughing with the effects rather than at them.

In spite of this, it's difficult not to love *The Mermaid*. That may seem like a grand claim, but it's just so bold,

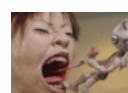


joyous and funny that it's hard to feel anything else towards it. The script is tight, silly and laugh-a-minute, but its heart is still as good and sweet as any endearing comedy.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Happiness Of The Katakuris
Takashi Miike's fantasy is weird, funny and sweet, with added gore and musical sequences.





BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE

Tears of a clown

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 15 // 73 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** 8 August **Director** Sam Liu
Cast Kevin Conroy, Mark Hamill, Tara Strong, Ray Wise **Distributor** Warner Home Video



One of the most acclaimed – and controversial – *Batman* comic-book series of all times, Alan Moore and

Brian Bolland's *The Killing Joke* remains for many the definitive take on the Joker, managing the unique feat of demystifying the Dark Knight's ultimate foe while making sure he loses none of what makes him so effective.

In animated form, none of the effect is lost. This is helped by voiceover big guns Kevin Conroy (Batman), Tara Strong (Batgirl) and Mark Hamill (The Joker) being brought back on board, their unparalleled takes on the characters (outside live action, at least) helping to anchor the story in its classic origins. That the story itself remains virtually unchanged from its journey to the screen stands as testament to the original storytelling.

Even before this though, we get some scene-setting that shows the minds behind this adaptation have more to give than just a straightforward translation. Before we get to the meat of the main story we witness

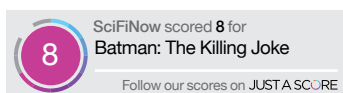


a sizeable – and unexpected – exploration of the relationship between Batman and Batgirl, which serves to both flesh her out beyond the basic 'victim' cipher she embodied in the original story and make her fate all the more affecting.

Amid all this is Hamill's Joker. While there are few weaknesses with the story, ultimately you're just waiting for him to turn up – and when he does, you won't be disappointed. As previously mentioned, simultaneously humanising the Joker while ensuring that he remains terrifying is no mean feat, yet it is managed here. Aided by the most – for lack of a better word – adult approach to a DC animated production for a while, and you have an unforgettable take on one of comics' most terrifying bad guys.

Alan Moore probably wouldn't appreciate us saying it, but *The Killing Joke* feels made for the screen. It's hard to truly critique something when it takes its cues from a truly excellent comic-book storyline, so we'll leave it at 'job well done'.

Steve Wright



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Batman Beyond: Return Of The Joker
 The Clown Prince of Crime returns from the grave to bother future Batman.

HIGHLANDER: 30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Still a kind of magic

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 15 // 116 mins // 1986 // **Released** Out now **Director** Russell Mulcahy
Cast Christopher Lambert, Sean Connery, Clancy Brown, Roxanne Hart
Distributor Studiocanal



Russell Mulcahy's triumph of Eighties silliness gets the 30th anniversary Blu-ray treatment it deserves,

showing off the incredible visual eye and the amazing soundtrack. *Highlander* is still a joyful experience, a film that's very much of its time, but hugely entertaining.

Christopher Lambert stars as the titular Connor MacLeod, who discovers that he is immortal and at the centre of a centuries-long battle to be the last man standing.

With Sean Connery as his Spanish-Egyptian mentor and Clancy Brown as the brutal villain Kurgan, it's ripe with hammy acting, self-aware humour and Queen songs.

Although it does drag a little in places, you're never far away from Lambert quipping at a Nazi before machine-gunning him, Brown licking a padre's hand, or someone bellowing "THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE!" This Blu-ray boasts a lovely restoration, and new interviews with Mulcahy and Lambert, the writers and producers. Like its hero, *Highlander* never gets old.

Jonathan Hatfull



MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

Close encounters of the freed kid

Details 12 // 112mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** 8 August **Director** Jeff Nichols
Cast Jaeden Lieberher, Michael Shannon, Joel Edgerton, Kirsten Dunst, Adam Driver
Distributor Entertainment One



In a time where a bit of positive thinking is something to be prized, you could be forgiven for noting down the Spielberg/Amblin comparisons that *Midnight Special* evoked upon its release. While it doesn't exactly fall squarely into the 'feelgood' category, it's still undoubtedly one of the best movies of the year.

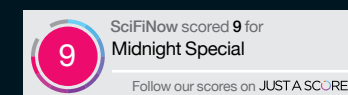
Seeing a mysterious and powerful yet vulnerable child escorted across the country by his parental guardians, *Midnight Special* is unique in the way in which it gives voice not only to this group, but to their potential captors, the most prominent among their number being scurrying scientist Severier (Adam Driver, who adds another string to his bow). It's hard to recall a sci-fi story this all-encompassing and dark, yet still heart-warming.

In truth, John Carpenter's *Starman* is the real touchstone here, a point hammered home by the brilliantly ambiguous finale. If you haven't seen it already, make sure you do so.

Steve Wright



SciFiNow Must see now!





SATAN'S BLADE Mountain of madness

Details 18 // 82 mins // 1984 //  **Released** Out now **Director** L. Scott Castillo Jr
Cast Tom Bongiorno, Stephanie Leigh Steel, Thomas Cue, Elisa R Malinovitz
Distributor Arrow Video



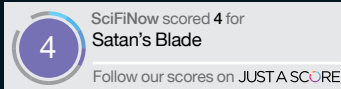
Those looking for a low-budget slasher gem may find a few things to enjoy in the re-release of *Satan's Blade*, but describing it as a gem would most certainly be pushing it.

After two bank robbers are murdered at a ski lodge, two groups show up to rent a cabin, hit the slopes and have a good time. Choosing to ignore an old lady's tale of a murderous mountain man who comes to wreak vengeance on visitors, they settle in, which is something they'll come to regret.

'Low-budget sleaze' is a fairly apt label for *Satan's Blade*, but arguably the most memorable thing about the film is the stilted dialogue.

Castillo Jr does manage a couple of decent frights, but the whole thing is a bit of a chore. Genre completists will want this restoration for their collection, but if you're looking for off-the-beaten-track slashers, you can do better.

Jonathan Hatfull



MASTERS OF VENUS Dross in space

Details U // 122 mins // 1962 //  **Released** Out now **Director** Ernest Morris
Cast Norman Wooland, Mandy Harper, Robin Stewart **Distributor** BFI



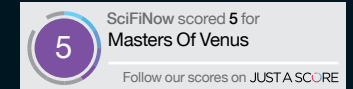
Made up of eight 15-minute episodes, *Masters Of Venus* takes us on an adventure from a space station on Earth up to the surface of Venus when two children get caught up in a conspiracy and accidentally find themselves in the space ship Astarte just because it's due to blast off for its inaugural trip. But the Astarte's crew have other things on

their minds when it turns out Venus is also home to descendants of the lost city of Atlantis.

Masters Of Venus is probably a fun and surprising adventure romp for kids under the age of ten with little to no space films experience. But when you watch it as an adult, it's hard to get excited about anything. The acting is bad, the effects are mediocre (for the time), and the story is just on the wrong side of lacklustre.

Even lovers of black-and-white sci-fi sagas such as this would have to admit that there are loads of other options out there that are far, far better than *Masters Of Venus*. But essentially it is for kids, so it seems to do the job.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



ATTACK ON TITAN: PARTS 1 & 2

Food for thought

Details 15 // 98 mins / 87 mins // 2016 //  **Released** Out now **Director** Shinji Higuchi **Cast** Haruma Miura, Hiroki Hasegawa, Kiko Mizuhara, Kanata Hongô
Distributor Manga Entertainment



Adapted from the massively popular manga series of the same name, it's hard to imagine *Attack On Titan* not holding any appeal to either existing fans (due to the novelty of finally seeing the story in live action) or to newcomers (thanks to the perfectly perfunctory premise: humanity taking a final stand after being hunted to the edge of extinction by gigantic humanoid, human-eating beings known as Titans).

Primarily following vengeful young Eren (Haruma Miura), who joins the army's Scouting Regiment in an attempt to reclaim land butcher some titans in the process, it's easy enough to enjoy on a number of levels. Original creator Hajime Isayama's own political leanings are easy enough to discern, with the pro-freedom/anti-militarism themes running throughout. Even so, this is easily undercut by the sheer blood-letting spectacle on show – for all the

carnage on show, it's not always easy to take seriously.

For every piece of meaningful discussion, there's a suitable amount of capering going on to ensure you don't take things too seriously. You have comic-relief characters like weapons-obsessed Hans (Satomi Ishihara), and the super-strong Sannagi (Satoru Matsuo), who casually lobs Titans aside and knocks down buildings in spite of no logical reason for his power existing (the latter feat he manages despite being pumped full of bullets).

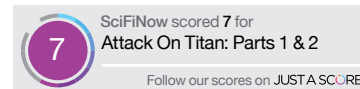
For all this, the Titans themselves are remarkably well-realised. Played by humans, they are brilliantly creepy, laughing while they chow down and tear screaming soldiers apart. They're such effective audience hate magnets that by the time it starts to dawn that the Titans aren't the real enemy, you realise you've been suckered in too.

Everything's so over the top that you will find yourself laughing even when



a serious point is being made. Still, the entertainment factor is prominent throughout. After all, giant monsters eating people... Even if you ignore the allegory, there's lots of fun here.

Steve Wright



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Parasyte
Another manga-to-film adaptation, this time centring on brain-invading aliens.





SciFiNow
Must
see now!

Season Two

GOTHAM Gotham's back, and this time the villains are rising...

Details TBC // 924 mins // 2015-16 // **DVD** // **Released** 8 August **Creator** Bruno Heller **Cast** Ben McKenzie, Donal Logue, David Mazouz, Sean Pertwee, Robin Lord Taylor, Erin Richards, Camren Bicondova, Cory Michael Smith **Distributor** Warner Home Video



Your attitude to

Gotham will depend on your tolerance for changing source material.

If you can get over the fact that Batman and Catwoman hung out together as kids, or that Penguin and Riddler were fully formed long before Batman came along, then you'll do fine.

Those who can't get over the changes are missing out. It might alter *Batman* mythos, but few shows have captured the comic-book aesthetic as well as the pulpy, cartoonishly violent *Gotham*.

Season Two sees Penguin establishing – and quickly losing – his position as the King of Gotham when new villain Theo Galavan (James Frain) arrives, while Bruce continues his quest to find out who murdered his parents. Jim Gordon (Ben McKenzie), meanwhile, has a new boss and a seriously crazy ex to deal with.

The first handful of episodes are the strongest in the show's run, with the emphasis firmly on shaking up the status quo and letting fan-favourite Jerome (Cameron Monaghan) run riot.



It settles down into something less compelling, but things really pick up in the second half of the season when the focus shifts to Arkham Asylum and BD Wong's brilliant Hugo Strange.

Gotham's strength has always been its villains, and while Robin Lord Taylor is wonderful as the Penguin, the Season Two stand-out might just be Cory Michael Smith's Ed Nygma, whose Riddler persona emerges at a frightening rate, with a guiltily enjoyable strain of black humour.

David Mazouz's Bruce Wayne takes centre stage this year, and it's thrilling to see him reject guns for the first time, or gaze awestruck as a villain in a cape swings through a warehouse. All he needs is a growth spurt and he'll be a damn fine Dark Knight.

Only Jim Gordon, supposedly the star of the show, is left out in the cold, with little to do but make questionable decisions and banter with the increasingly 2D Harvey Bullock.

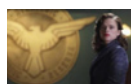
The show needs to work on its heroes, but when it's bad it's very good.

Abigail Chandler



SciFiNow scored **8** for
Gotham
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Agent Carter
Hayley Atwell stars as the titular character in this sadly short-lived superhero spy thriller.

LEGENDS OF TOMORROW Time team

Details 12 // 696 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** 29 August **Creators** Greg Berlanti, Andrew Kreisberg, Marc Guggenheim, Phil Klemmer **Cast** Arthur Darvill, Brandon Routh, Caity Lotz, Wentworth Miller, Dominic Purcell, Victor Garber, Franz Drameh, Ciara Renée, Falk Hentschel, Casper Crump **Distributor** Warner Home Video



Having established its

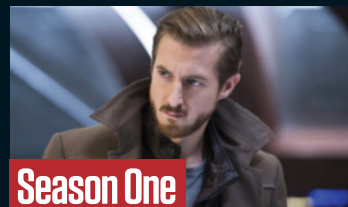
aptitude for small-screen superheroics via *Arrow* and *The Flash*, The CW turns

its eye to team-ups with *Legends Of Tomorrow*, which sees time-traveller Rip Hunter (Arthur Darvill) recruit a number of supporting cast members from its sister shows, including Ray Palmer (Brandon Routh), Sara Lance (Caity Lotz) and Leonard 'Captain Cold' Snart (Wentworth Miller) to thwart Vandal Savage (Casper Crump).

The result is chaotic, the ensemble intent on imploding rather than actually completing their mission. This radiates through the rest of the show, which seemingly takes a while to decide exactly what it wants to be. Is it a buddy comedy, an attempt at creating The CW's own Justice League, or a mission-of-the-week serial?

There are also some creative choices that are a far cry from the well-oiled machine that we're used to seeing from a Greg Berlanti production. The dialogue on *Arrow* and *The Flash* is not exactly clunk-free, but here far more lines fall flat.

Some characters fare better than others. While Snart and Mick 'Heat Wave' Rory (Dominic Purcell) grab the lion's share of the quotes, the Hawk-couple (Ciara Renée and Falk



Season One

Hentschel) never gel with the rest of the cast, and Lotz's Sara feels like a completely different character.

Despite this, things get better. Later developments mean this ends up being far from the consequence-free time romp we had assumed: the characters have been altered forever. Highlights include 'Left Behind', which has half the team stranded in Fifties Oregon, and 'The Magnificent Eight', that showcases The CW's take on Jonah Hex.

By the finale, *Legends* finally finds its feet. It may have taken a while to get there, but now there's the sense that it knows what it is and what it has the potential to be.

Steve Wright



SciFiNow scored **6** for
Legends Of Tomorrow
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Time Tunnel

Two hapless scientists travel through time, accidentally witnessing big historical moments.





11.22.63 Save the President, save the world

Details 15 // 500 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** 15 August **Creator** Bridget Carpenter **Cast** James Franco, Sarah Gadon, George MacKay, Chris Cooper, Daniel Webber, Lucy Fry **Distributor** Warner Home Video



This semi-faithful adaptation of Stephen King's doorstep of a novel benefits hugely from excellent casting and its limited miniseries

structure, which leaves enough time to flesh out its world and characters while ensuring that we never forget about that grassy knoll countdown.

High-school English teacher Jake Epping (James Franco) is having a bit of a life crisis when Al (Chris Cooper), his friend at the local diner, shows him something incredible: a portal back to 1960. The dying Al wants Jake to stop JFK's assassination, but can he survive for three years in the past, and is Lee Harvey Oswald (Daniel Webber) actually the man who pulled the trigger?

Despite the violence and bad language, there is something quite old-fashioned about *11.22.63* (which does make all the f-bombs quite shocking). Jake's a good man who keeps slipping up on his way to his final destination, his good intentions invariably thwarted by his own mistakes or by the past pushing back. Franco settles into the part very nicely, finding

the character's humour, romanticism and increasing desperation.

It helps that he's backed up by an incredible cast. Cooper's intensity grounds the premise early on, Webber makes for a complex Oswald, *Pride's* George MacKay is excellent as Jake's right-hand man Bill, Josh Duhamel and TR Knight have fun as era-appropriate monsters, and there's very good work from veterans like Cherry Jones, Nick Searcy, Tonya Pinkins and Leon Rippy. However, the star of the show is Sarah Gadon (*Cosmopolis*) as Jake's love interest Sadie, finding the heart, wit and grit in what could have been a two-dimensional character.

There are lulls, but showrunner Bridget Carpenter finds the grim realities underneath the candy-coated Sixties, as Jake witnesses racism, domestic abuse and government failures. It's got plenty of King's big heart, but it doesn't ignore the darkness, and there's an emotional impact that we didn't quite expect, but very much appreciated. It might take a little while to get into it, but you'll be sad when it's over.

Jonathan Hatfull



SciFiNow scored **7** for *11.22.63*

Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



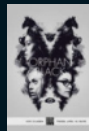
Life On Mars

John Simm goes back in time in this endlessly rewatchable modern classic. Or does he?



ORPHAN BLACK Sister, sister, sister, sister

Details 15 // 431 mins // 2016 // **DVD** • **NETFLIX** // **Released** Out now
Creators John Fawcett, Graeme Manson, Alex Levine **Cast** Tatiana Maslany, Jordan Gavaris, Maria Doyle Kennedy, Kristian Bruun **Distributor** Netflix



With Orphan Black, you can usually expect a lot of family drama, among the clones and the families they've each built. However, this gets turned up another notch for Season Four, and everything starts to fall apart more violently than usual.

Sarah falls out with S and Felix when the latter goes in search of his biological family, Helena has problems fitting in with the Hendrixes' neighbourhood, Cosima can't cope with Delphine's sudden disappearance, and things go terribly wrong for Alison and Donnie when their luxury soaps business/secret drugs ring from Season Three comes back to bite them.

The Dyad Institute also gets a lot more sinister as its research methods are exposed and Rachel Duncan attempts to take over from her late father, and we finally find out more about that whole frustrating Island of Doctor Moreau storyline.

The show's aesthetics and writing continues to be excellent, but it's all held together by the strength of its characters. Tatiana Maslany has even more work to do this season, playing not only Sarah, Cosima, Alison, Helen and Rachel, but the newly introduced MK, a conspiracy theorist, and beautician Krystal Goderitch, who we met briefly in



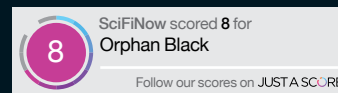
SciFiNow
Must see now!

Season Three. The long-since dead Beth Childs also makes some meaty appearances, as we venture back and get a look at the events that led up to her suicide in the pilot.

The supporting cast is also brilliant. With all the conspiracies and evil plots going on, there are a lot of characters to hate. But each is so well written, from their personalities to their motivations, that it's actually quite difficult not to love them too.

It has been great since the start, but as the fifth season – set to air next year – will be its last, it needs to step up its already brilliant game to become truly memorable.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



iZombie

Rose McIver plays loads of characters too as a zombie who retains her humanity by eating brains.

Season Four





Season One

LIMITLESS

Limited addition

Details 15 // 902 mins // **DVD** // 22 August **Creator** Craig Sweeny **Cast** Jake McDormann, Jennifer Carpenter, Hill Harper, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Colin Salmon, Bradley Cooper
Distributor Paramount Home Entertainment



2011 Bradley Cooper-starrer *Limitless* was a decent enough suspense thriller, but its 105-minute length didn't allow much time for exploring the concept on which its plot revolves: a designer drug called NZT that turns the user into Sherlock on speed. Over 22 episodes, this spin-off series had ample opportunity to debate the pros and cons of using chemistry to enhance human potential.

As it is, the amount of imagination that appears to have gone into it doesn't do justice to the title it inherited. In the movie, Cooper's struggling writer, Eddie Morra, turns into Super-Yuppie when he's on the pill, but goes into meltdown when hasn't taken it. Although pitched as a sequel, the pilot replicates the source material aside from introducing a new hopped-up hero, Brian Finch (Jake McDormann), a failed musician.

Finch is introduced to NZT by an old friend who, true to form, is soon murdered. Instead of aiming for political office like Morra, however, Finch is

recruited by the FBI as a consultant. He doesn't display the psychotic side effects that the Bureau's previous NZT test subjects exhibited, so they hook him up with a daily dose and an upscale New York apartment and try to figure out why he's not ripping his eyes out.

What Finch's FBI handlers, Agents Harris and Boyle (Jennifer Carpenter and Hill Harper), don't realise is that he is only able to hold it together because Morra, now a Senator, is giving him an antidote to his addiction in return for certain favours. Cooper does appear in a few episodes, but more often than not Morra's interests are represented by Colin Salmon, who has more charisma than everyone else put together.

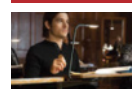
The worst crime in *Limitless*, though, is that the scripts largely ignore the ethical boundaries the FBI is crossing and the wider social implications of NZT in favour of detective stories that are quirky rather than clever. The result is another mundane procedural that gives genre fans nothing new.

Michael Simpson

SciFiNow scored **5** for **Limitless**

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Magicians
Equally clever FX and a more imaginative story makes this Syfy series something to be alert to.



TIMESLIP

Back to the future

Details U // 644 mins // **DVD** // 1970 **Creator** Ruth Boswell
Cast Spencer Banks, Cheryl Burfield, Denis Quilley, Iris Russell, Derek Benfield
Distributor Network



Climate change, cloning and the prevalence of technology: not only are these some of sci-fi's most fruitful topics, they're some of the most divisive issues of today. With that in mind, classic British children's TV show *Timeslip* is eerily prescient, having confronted these subjects head on in its short but enduringly popular run.

Originally aired in 1970, the ATV production follows the adventures of two children who discover a time barrier – a portal through which they can travel to both the past and the future. Feisty Liz Skinner (Cheryl Burfield) and bookish Simon Randall (Spencer Banks) first travel back to World War II, before finding themselves in the distant, dystopian future of... 1990.

Past, present and alternate futures intertwine as the series progresses, and the result is an unexpectedly complex comment on identity and the misuse of technology. All this is dressed up in the homespun garb of a low-budget Seventies TV production, but the ideas powering *Timeslip* are interesting enough for its technical deficiencies to be overlooked.

Unfortunately, these ideas take their time in coming to the fore.

Though it serves its purpose as a more grounded introduction to the characters and concepts, *Timeslip*'s first serial is also its weakest. It's only when Liz and Simon jump forward in time – first to a futuristic research base in Antarctica, and then to a tropical England afflicted by global warming – that the show really begins to shine.

Nostalgia, or lack thereof, will probably define just how much you'll get out of *Timeslip* in 2016. But even for those unfamiliar with the show, it's not hard to see why it remains a fondly remembered touchstone of British TV sci-fi. And for long-time fans, Network's reissue is definitive, packing in a documentary, a 2005 mini-episode and almost everything else that could be hoped for, short of the show's lost colour tapes.

More than a little antiquated, but also charming and ambitious, *Timeslip* manages to be both dated and refreshingly ahead of its time.

Ross Hamilton

SciFiNow scored **7** for **Timeslip**

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

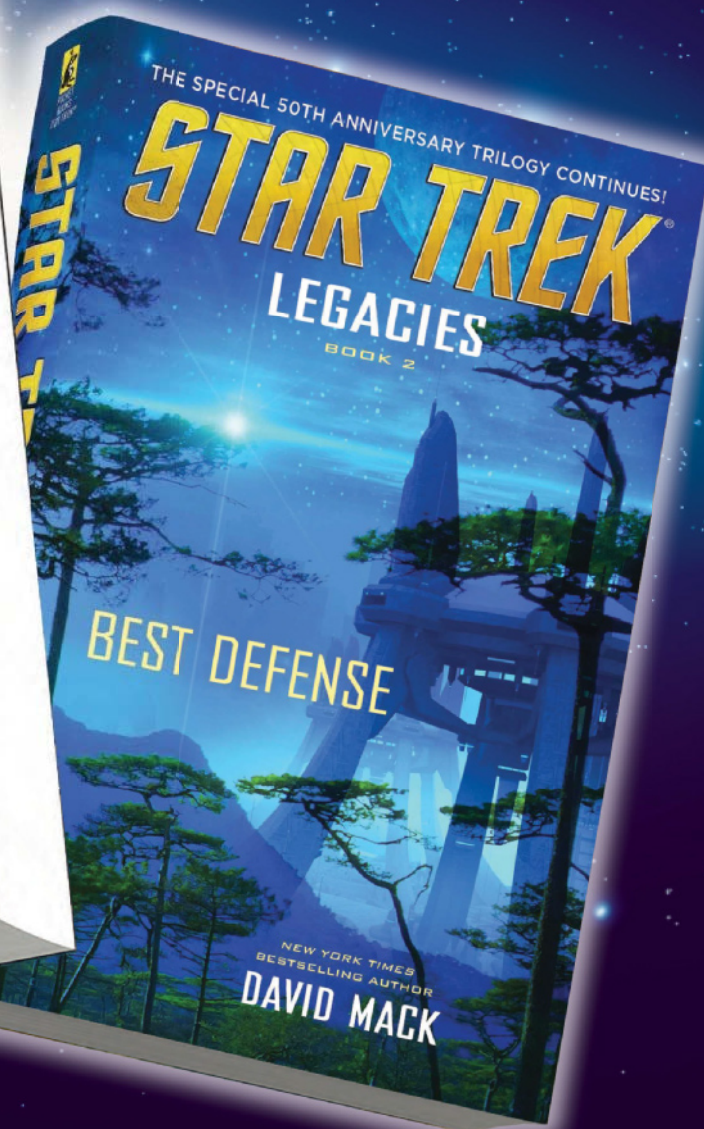


Doctor Who
The classic BBC series has some truly excellent serials, along with its fair share of nonsensical rubbish.

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AGE OF CONAN: THE STRATEGY BOARD GAME

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // Players: 2-4 // RRP: £77.99

Age Of Conan has been in circulation for a while now, but poor timing on its original release and a focus from Fantasy Flight Games on some bigger, higher-profile licences meant it never received the love it deserved. Hopefully, this new reissue should go some way to changing that.

Age Of Conan is a game of strategy and conquest that's played across three distinct Ages between four warring Kingdoms: Aquilonia, Stygia, Turan and Hyperborea. Each Age consists of Conan going on one of four adventures, and moves to the new Age when Conan finally completes each adventure. While no player controls Conan during the game, each has the opportunity to temporarily gain control of him at the start of each new adventure via a neat bidding process.

Moving Conan closer to his current adventure objective earns the player an Adventure Token (in the form of a monster, women or treasure). Alternatively, the player might want to move Conan towards a nearby battle, where his great power can often turn a skirmish in the player's favour. Many gamers will want to stock up on

Adventure Tokens though, as they play a crucial role at the end of the game. If a player is feeling brave then they can attempt to Crown Conan during the third Age. The player chooses one of the three Adventure categories and everyone reveals their cards of that type. If the player has the highest point value then he succeeds in crowning Conan and receives a huge points boost, otherwise he's immediately killed, leaving the other players to tot up their final scores.

Of course, while Conan is embarking on his grand quests, the four players are all vying for control of Hyboria, which essentially means that each player is attempting to gain control of new provinces and those owned by their opponents. As mentioned, players can gain help from Conan here, but it's at the expense of Adventure Tokens, so it's a decision that can't be taken lightly.

Each turn see Fate Dice being thrown, which determines what actions will be available to players. Actions can be Military, Intrigue or Court + Conan, and vary greatly. Military lets you move armies or attack with them, Intrigue allows you to move emissaries or attempt a

1 CONAN AND TOWER MARKER

The Conan figure represents where he currently is in the game, and the Destination Marker where he needs to head.

2 FIGURES

The plastic figures are extremely durable and full of detail. They represent numerous forces, and are every bit as good as you'd expect from the publisher.

3 FATE DICE

Each side represents a different action available to players. It ensures each turn always feels fresh and a little unpredictable.

5 BOARD

The board is beautifully illustrated and is a stunning map of Hyboria.

4 TOKENS

Tokens are used for bidding on who gets to control Conan. They also represent gold, empire points and sorcery.

6 CONTEST DICE

These are used to resolve any contents between players that appear throughout the game.

7 ADDITIONAL CARDS

These represent Conan's adventures through Hyboria, powerful artifacts the player can use, strategy cards and objective cards.

8 KINGDOM CARDS

Each Hyborian kingdom has its own specific deck of cards that represent the characters, events, powers and units at the kingdom's disposal.

coup through diplomatic means, while Court let you draw cards or find ways to subtly influence Conan to your favour.

Age Of Conan isn't a game for newcomers, as it's fairly layered and quite deep, requiring a good couple of hours to play. It is, however, a finally honed war game that should please even non-Conan fans.

BEST FOR: EXPERIENCED GAMERS

TOP FIVE

MAGIC: THE GATHERING – ETERNAL MASTERS



1. KARAKAS £90



2. FORCE OF WILL £75



3. MANA CRYPT £75



4. JACE, THE MIND SCULPTOR £60



5. WASTELAND £45

9 FORT AND TOWER MARKERS

Used to indicate when players have control of provinces using military or diplomatic means.

Dice Masters: Civil War Starter Set

Publisher: WizKids Games // Players: 1-4 // RRP: £14.99

It seems like every few weeks a new *Dice Masters* expansion comes out. This latest addition focuses on Marvel's *Civil War*, and like many other *Dice Masters* games can be either combined with previous sets or played as a standalone product.

There's a solid selection of characters to choose from in *Civil War*, including Iron Man, Jessica Jones, Rocket Raccoon, Ant-Man, Spider-Man and Captain America, although it's worth noting that this version is based on the comic and not the actual movie. The die quality is as good as ever, with easy-to-

see sides and some excellent-looking markings.

Civil War also adds several new gameplay mechanics. Characters with the Fast ability heal quicker than those without it. Intimidate allows you to remove other die from play, while Resistance lets you gain life if a character gets knocked out. Enlistment is a powerful ability that triggers a specific action if a character is knocked out, while more character cards make use of the Sidekick ability from earlier games.

Civil War is an extremely solid update that's thematically



sound and integrates extremely well with past sets. Film fans will be disappointed about some of the character selections, but everyone else will find another excellent addition to the long-running series.

BEST FOR: CASUAL GAMERS

Back To The Future: An Adventure Through Time

Publisher: IDW Games // Players: 2-4 // RRP: £16.99

Remember that part in *Back To The Future 2* when the plot gets so complicated that Doc has to explain everything to Marty? That's what playing IDW's game is like.

While the concept is solid and ties into the movie, the execution is anything but. Essentially you're trying to earn the most victory points by completing missions that take place across three distinct timelines, 1955, 1985 and

2015. Missions range from remembering to put on a bulletproof vest to ensuring that George has the courage to stand up to Biff. You complete missions by having all three required characters for the mission in the correct time zone.

At the start of each turn players choose a famous character from the films, each of which has a specific power, from allowing you to move the DeLorean without paying

Power, to stealing a character from another player. It's a solid idea, but does mean that the final player is disadvantaged.

Another issue is that moving the DeLorean between time zones typically costs three Power. You can only play characters in their specific zones, so if you can't pay, you effectively waste a turn through no fault of your own.

Its fate is further sealed by its fairly ambiguous rulebook. It does have some lovely looking art, mind.

BEST FOR: FANS OF THE MOVIE

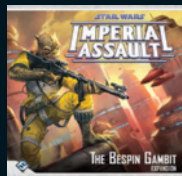


Expansion Of The Month STAR WARS IMPERIAL ASSAULT: THE BESPIN GAMBIT

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games

// Players: 2-5 // RRP: £34.99

While it lacks the punch and pizzazz of *Return To Hoth*, *The Bespin Gambit* is still a worth addition to your *Imperial Assault* collection. It features many of the memorable locations from Empire, such as the carbon freezing chamber and the throne room where Lando's treachery takes place. Key figures like Lando and the bounty hunter Bossk appear, but as with previous sets, they need to be purchased separately. While the mini-campaign is rather slight, it's extended by some solid epilogues that provide satisfying conclusions. A solid, satisfying expansion.

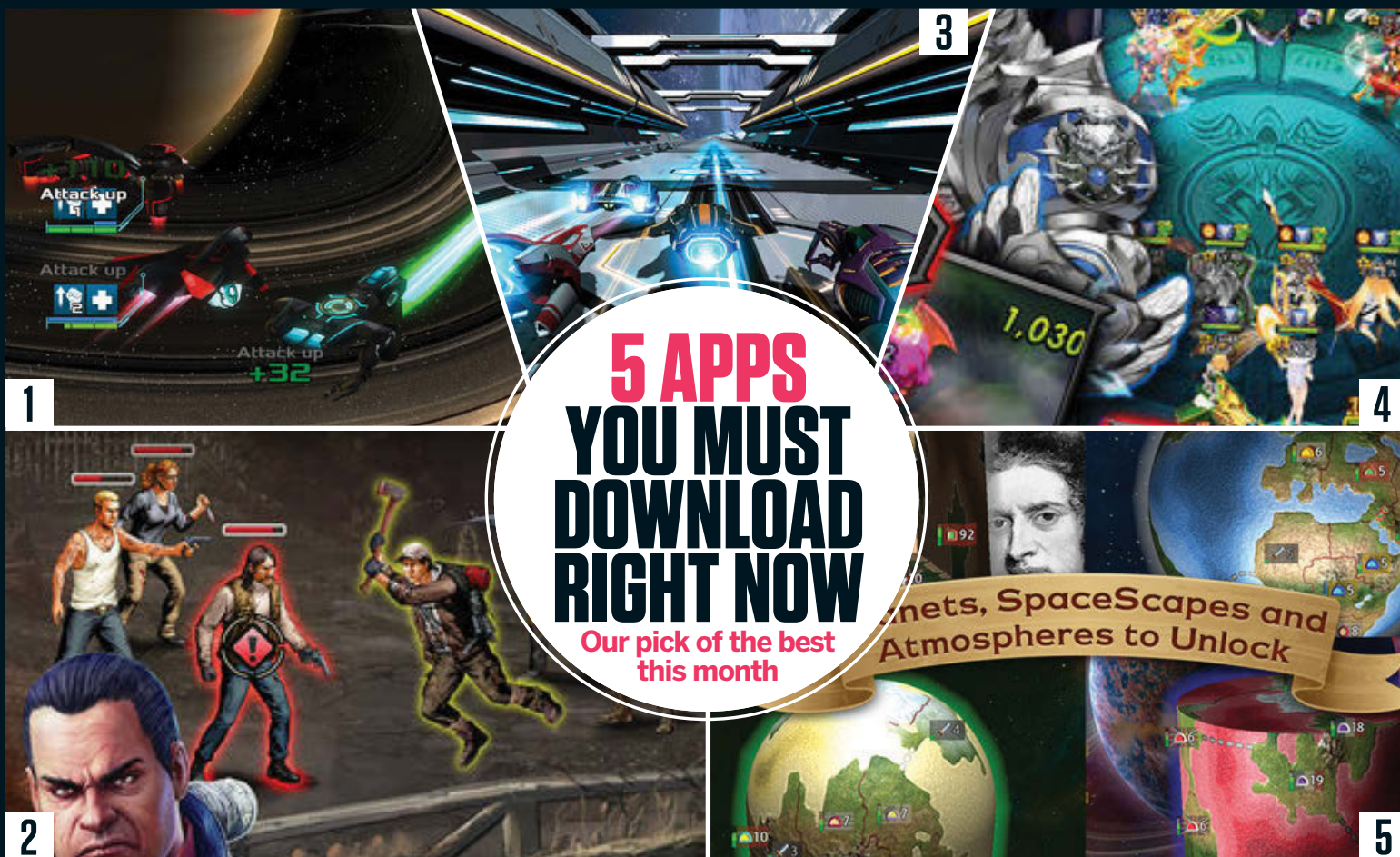


Do You Remember? HERO QUEST: WIZARDS OR MORCARN

The D&D universe goes apocalyptic

Wizards Of Morcar was released in 1993, and was one of the last expansions released for the game. Mercenaries were new characters that could be hired by heroes, and made it easier to play *Hero Quest* with just two players. Mercenaries consisted of Fighters, Hellebardiers, Crossbowmen and Scouts, all of which had useful, unique abilities. There are four evil wizards to defeat, each of which came with their own unique deck of spells, and there are a large number of new treasure cards, too. Although MB only included five new quests, each and every one is incredibly tough, with many deadly encounters and traps meaning it will take a fair while to complete.





INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE: BATTLE HEROES

FOR: iOS/ANDROID
PRICE: FREE



1 Get another fix after *Independence Day: Resurgence* with this new app, as you join the combat ranks of Earth Space Defence and protect the world from another alien invasion. Assemble squadrons of fighter jets, recruit teams of elite pilots and launch attacks at Earth's biggest threat. It's like being in the actual film – if the film was tiny enough to hold in one hand.

BEST FOR: PATRIOTIC PLAYERS



THE WALKING DEAD: ROAD TO SURVIVAL

FOR: iOS/ANDROID
PRICE: FREE



2 The best way to fill the walker until *The Walking Dead* is back on our screens is by getting your gamer mitts on this updated free fighting and strategy RPG. As it's based on an all-new story from the series' award-winning writer Jay Bonansinga, it's practically like being in an episode – Granted, one from Season Three. The aim is to take over Woodbury and stop the Governor wreaking havoc.

BEST FOR: WALKER STALKERS



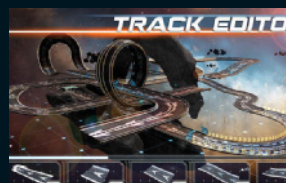
COSMIC CHALLENGE

FOR: iOS/ANDROID
PRICE: FREE



3 If you're looking for extra excitement on your commute to work then look for further. Be transported from the back of the bus to the cockpit of a super-powered space racer with *Cosmic Challenge* from Ivanovich Games. The controls and concept are fairly simple – it's basically just a racer game, only in space – but the gorgeous graphics, online competitions and option to create your own circuit and loads more sets this one apart from the rest.

BEST FOR: SPEED DEMONS



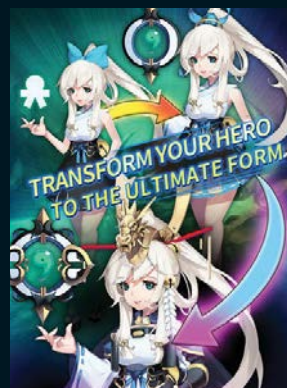
DRAGON HEROES: SHOOTER RPG

FOR: iOS/ANDROID
PRICE: FREE



4 Let out all your hidden dragon rage with this shooter RPG. With loads of action-packed gameplay to complete, ultimate teams to form and gigantic bosses to battle, you'll be hard-pressed to find a better method than this for blowing off steam during your tea break. Even your friends can get involved – forge powerful guilds and embark on adventures so you can all blow off steam together.

BEST FOR: DRAGON WARRIORS



RAPTURE: WORLD CONQUEST

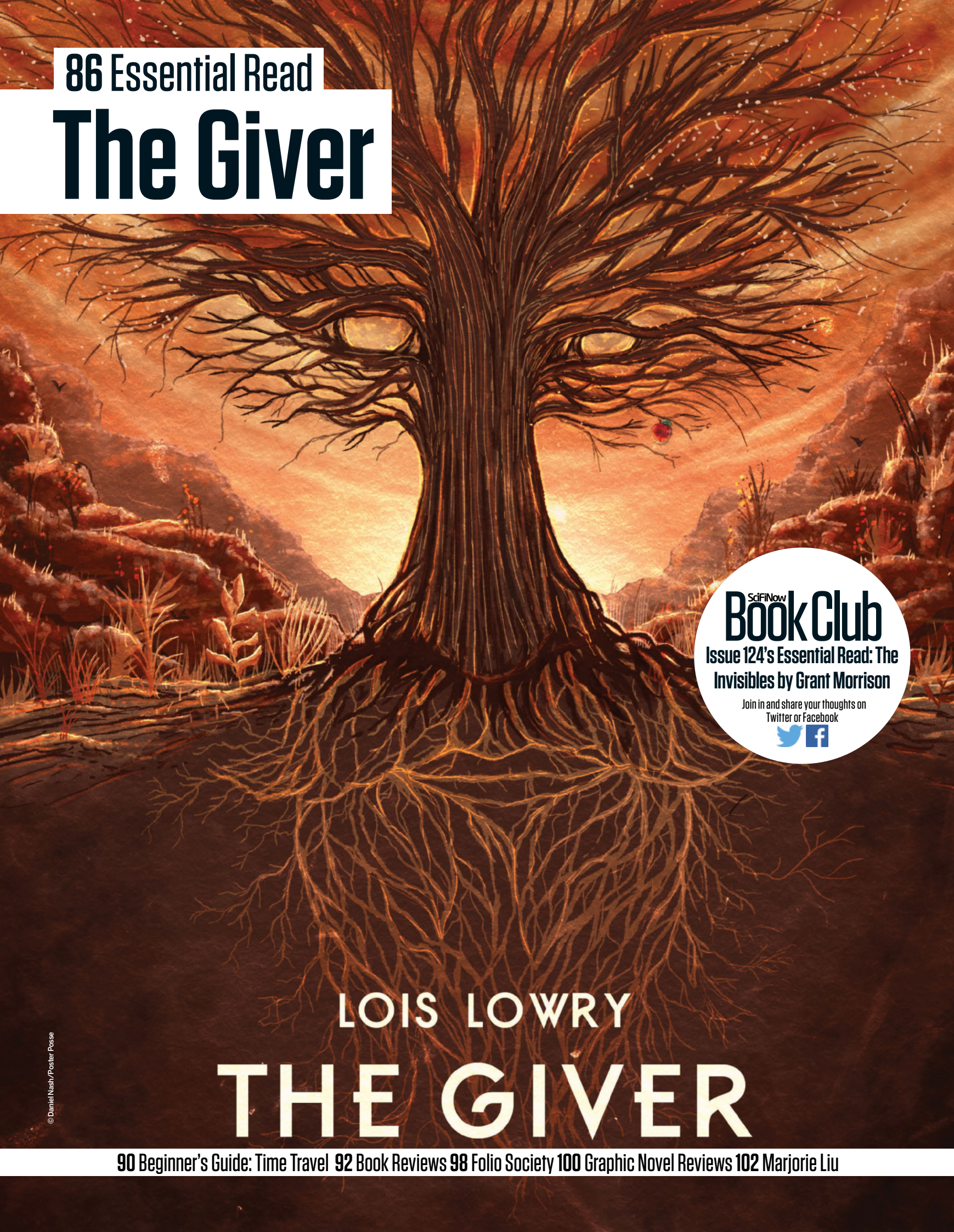
FOR: iOS/ANDROID
PRICE: FREE



5 Fans of Tundra Games' addictive app *Rapture: World Conquest* – in which you attempt to take over the world by unleashing devastating miracles – will be thrilled to learn that they've brought out a shiny new version. Now you can alter just about everything: game speed, planet size, planet landmass, the seas, new planets – the road to world domination has never been this smooth.

BEST FOR: PLANET COLLECTORS





86 Essential Read

The Giver

SciFiNow
Book Club

Issue 124's Essential Read: *The Invisibles* by Grant Morrison

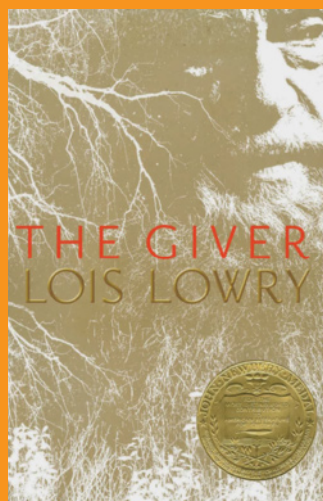
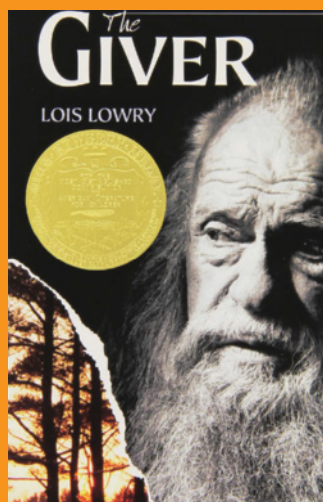
Join in and share your thoughts on
Twitter or Facebook



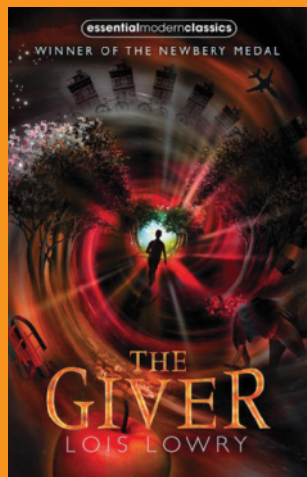
LOIS LOWRY

THE GIVER

90 Beginner's Guide: Time Travel 92 Book Reviews 98 Folio Society 100 Graphic Novel Reviews 102 Marjorie Liu



"I WAS ALWAYS AT ODDS WITH THE RIGIDLY ORDERED LIVES THAT MY PARENTS VALUED"
LOIS LOWRY



Essential read:

The Giver

Before *The Maze Runner*, before *Divergent* and before *The Hunger Games*, there was *The Giver*. Lois Lowry has a lot to answer for

WORDS MATTHEW HANDRAHAN

At a time when anyone with a laptop and an internet connection can be an author, genuine literary success requires strategy. Big publishing houses are now more circumspect about what they take on than ever before, and their marketing budgets are deployed more judiciously still. If you're trying to build a career then there are a few principles you might want to follow: pitch a series of books, not just one; and if that series can be centred on a group of adolescents in a futuristic dystopia, so much the better.

To a large extent, the ongoing trend for that particular flavour of YA fiction is down to *The Hunger Games*, but Suzanne Collins was more a catalyst than a pioneer. That honour belongs to Lois Lowry, who was part of the same wave of writers as Judy Blume, the first to grapple with serious subjects in literature intended for children and adolescents. For the most part, this first flourish of the YA sub-genre was preoccupied with domestic strife, emotional trauma and personal exploration. Eventually though, Lowry inadvertently pushed it into the realm of science fiction.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of Lowry's innovation is that it took her

so long to make the creative leap. As the child of a military family, moving from US Army base to US Army base, she was exposed to what seemed like alien landscapes from a very early age, and none more so than Japan. In an awards acceptance speech, Lowry recalled being an 11-year-old girl in 1948, stationed amid the bustle and noise of post-war Tokyo. But that intoxicating atmosphere never penetrated the walls of Washington Heights, the "odd replica of a United States village" in which her family lived.

It was only when Lowry gave in to temptation, escaping through an unwatched back gate on her bike, that she became aware of what her parents were trying to protect her from: Shuibuaya, a district of Tokyo, "throbbing with life." Speaking to *Slate*, she recalled the experience – and many others like it – as formative. "I like your phrase, 'skeptics of conformity,'" she said. "I grew up on military bases because my father was a career army officer, and I was always vaguely at odds with the rigidly ordered lives that they valued and that I was for the most part forced to live."

While this impulse toward individual empowerment would be vital to some of her most important work as an author,

her move into literature was galvanised by misfortune and tragedy. She married in 1956 at the age of 19, and set aside her writerly ambitions to start a family. When that relationship ended 21 years later, Lowry found herself in a position, for the first time in her life, to make a living. A smattering of freelance short stories for *Redbook* magazine brought an offer from Houghton Mifflin to attempt a novel, so she returned to the story with which she was most familiar: the life of her sister, who had passed away at the age of 28.

"I had told the story of my sister's death, to myself, for many, many years... going over it again and again in my head, the whys and the what-ifs," Lowry said in an interview with Scholastic. "To write it down for others was a very satisfying thing to do."

Her debut novel, *A Summer To Die*, won an award and, more importantly, an enthusiastic young audience who appreciated the candour and tenderness with which the novel approached its difficult subject. "Their letters were very moving," she recalled in an interview with the *School Library Journal*, "and I began to think that writing children's books could be not only a viable way to support myself, but also a way of

***The Giver* pioneered YA fiction, and its legacy is still felt today.**





**"I BEGAN TO THINK
THAT WRITING
CHILDREN'S BOOKS
COULD BE NOT ONLY
A VIABLE WAY TO
SUPPORT MYSELF,
BUT ALSO A WAY
OF AFFECTING
YOUNG PEOPLE"**

LOIS LOWRY

©REX



SYNOPSIS

In Jonas' world, you do not choose; you are told, and you follow the rules without question or argument. Soon, Jonas will be told the

role he will play in the future of his society, but while his classmates are assigned to a number of familiar tasks, his own future holds something very different.

Jonas will become a Receiver, a position held by only one person, whose task it is to absorb and retain the collective memories of the community's past. The old Receiver becomes the Giver, Jonas' guide through a process that will challenge everything he believed to be true. He will feel happiness for the first time, he will feel pain, and he will see back to all of the trouble and calamity that his community tried so hard to forget.

In Jonas' world, you do not choose, but Jonas sees that his community's Elders did make a choice – one that deprived the people of freedom in the pursuit of stability and 'sameness'. Now, it is Jonas' time to choose the way forward, both for himself and those around him.

Your Take On The Classic

WHAT YOU THOUGHT
@SCIFINOW



"Loved it! Studied it at school and convinced my boyfriend to watch the film!"
@LibraryTasha



@FromTheWastes

"Loved it! Also very much enjoyed the other 3 books in that 'series'. Interesting take on the postapocalypse."



"I adored it. Sharp, poignant commentary in fantastic prose and great characters."
@JeremySzal



"It was amazing and thought-provoking!"
@ldatevillains



"To this day, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry is one of my favorite books and fostered my love of reading. 'If we can't feel, what's the point?'" @Adriana_Lacy



"If you were never forced to read *The Giver* by Lois Lowry or any book by her please take the time out to do so. One of the best utopian stories"
@wowtneria



"As a child I really did not heed how creepy that book was."
@FthrClintPower



"I remember really enjoying *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. It was written like 20 years ago. Good reads, for sure!"
@iarehautjobb



"*The Giver* by Lois Lowry was the first book that ever inspired me to read long into the night!" @MisterDReads



"Must have read that a thousand times and still pick it up a lot!"
@LisaCorrWrites



"On the list of classics, I still continue to reread Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. It's like 1984 with a shot of fantasy on the side." @LilahQuinn

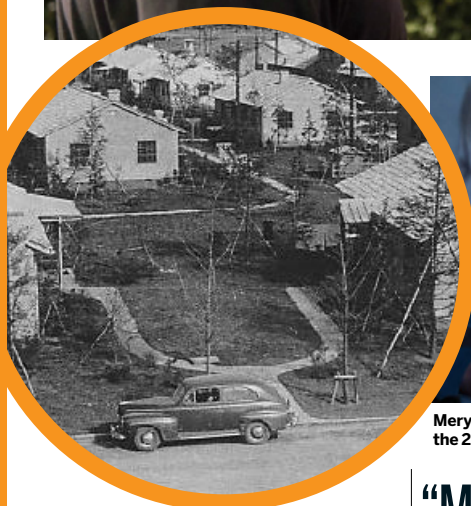


"The whole three-eyed-raven/Bran thing seems like a massive *The Giver* rip-off. I don't mind, but I hope Lois Lowry is getting a cut!" @JeanDanielCW

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



Lowry's novel encourages people to question authority – and challenge it if necessary.



Meryl Streep starred in the 2014 film adaptation.

"MY PARENTS SOUGHT TO SHIELD ME... MY RESPONSE HAD BEEN TO SEE FOR MYSELF WHAT LAY BEYOND THAT WALL"

LOIS LOWRY

safe my parents had sought to make my childhood by shielding me... But I remember that my response had been to open the gate again and again. My instinct had been a child's attempt to see for myself what lay beyond the wall."

The thought was completed by her parents, who were at that point both in their Eighties and residents in the same nursing home. On one visit in 1992, Lowry's mother, who was blind, was insistent on retelling stories from her life, including the painful memory that had inspired *A Summer To Die* 15 years before. "Clearly her saddest memory," Lowry said to the *School Library Journal*, "but she wanted to retell it."

Her father's memory was failing, and while perusing an old photo album, he would alight again on a picture of Helen, Lowry's departed sister. Each time he would ask what had happened to her, and upon hearing the tragic news he would experience the pain afresh.

"Driving back to the airport that day, I began to think about memory – how we use it, how painful it can be, yet how necessary. What if we could manipulate it? What if I could leave my mother with

all those happy memories of puppies and picnics and take away the sad memory of the day her daughter died?"

"In creating that community, I had to figure out what their world would consist of and what they had been able to control. They were without war, poverty, crime, alcoholism, divorce – and without the troubling memories of those things. Only gradually did I begin to understand that I was not creating a utopia, but a dystopia. I slowly understood that I was writing about a group of people who had at some point in the past made collective choices and terrible sacrifices in order to achieve a level of comfort and security."

Looking back, it's easy to see *The Giver* as a major departure, with Lowry bringing elements of classic dystopian fiction like George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* into her work for the first time. But it felt different in the moment, too. According to Lowry, who wrote about finishing the novel for *The Huffington Post*, "It had all the elements of the 17 or so books I had written before, the same things students

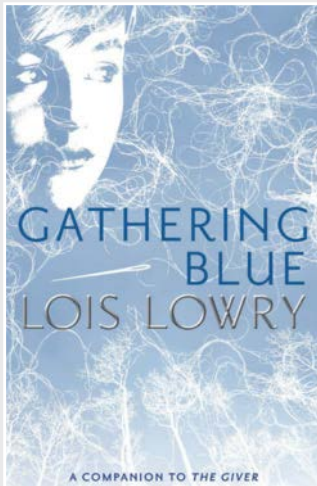
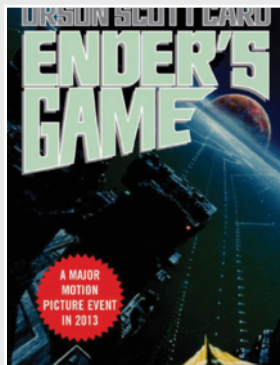


Where Have I Seen This Before?

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD

ENDER'S GAME ▶

In its exploration of innocence and the way that it is manipulated by a ruling elite, Orson Scott Card's 1985 debut shares a lot of common ground with *The Giver*. It also became a fixture in classrooms, albeit of a very different kind to those in which Lowry's work became commonplace. The lower ranks of the US Marine Corps are advised to read *Ender's Game* even now.

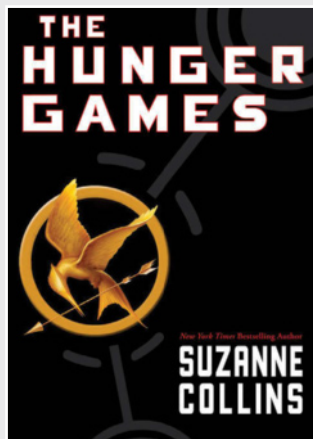


◀ GATHERING BLUE

The Giver was conceived as a solitary work, but Lowry's ambiguous conclusion pleased nobody more than herself. After fielding the same handful of questions from enthusiastic readers over a period of years, she eventually gave in to the temptation to further explore the world she had created. *Gathering Blue* was the first of three sequels, the others being *Messenger* and *Son*.

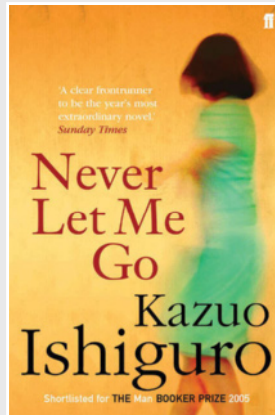
THE HUNGER GAMES ▶

Or *Divergent*. Or *The Maze Runner*. Or *Unwind*. Or... well, you get the idea. *The Hunger Games* may have sparked a trend for dystopian Young Adult fiction, but there's no doubting the debt it – or any of the books mentioned – owes to *The Giver*. A key difference is Suzanne Collins' use of violence, about which Lowry has voiced her concerns on several occasions.



PLEASANTVILLE ▲

Lois Lowry attracted criticism from fans and followers of science fiction due to *The Giver*'s lack of logical weight. One example is the removal of all colour from the world, a visual motif that is scarcely explained or justified. It is fitting, then, that a similar work that leaps to mind is a light fantasy film: Gary Ross's underseen and underrated *Pleasantville*.



◀ NEVER LET ME GO

We must be careful when discussing the work of an author like Kazuo Ishiguro, so beloved of the Booker-worshipping literati. Describing *Never Let Me Go* as a 'YA fiction for adults' is likely to result in your windows being pelted with Waitrose free-range eggs. But that doesn't make it an insult, nor inaccurate for that matter. The thematic concerns are similar, but the artistry is undeniable.

THE GIVER ▶

Lowry's novel was first prepped for a cinema adaptation less than two years after its publication. It remained in various stages of development right up to the point that Jeff Bridges, a longstanding fan, managed to push it through with The Weinstein Company in 2014. Lowry has been kind about the worth of Philip Noyce's film, but tepid reviews and its box-office performance tell a different story.



of writing list on school quizzes: characters, plot, setting, tension, climax... But I was aware that this book was different from the many I had already written.

"My editor, when I gave him the manuscript, realised the same thing. If I had drawn a cartoon of him reading those pages, it would have had a text balloon over his head. The text would have said, simply: 'Gulp.'"

That sense of trepidation would prove well founded. No sooner had *The Giver* found its way into classrooms – where it was placed by teachers impressed by the moral lessons at its core – challenges were issued by angry parents to the American Library Association. It has hovered near the top of the 'most challenged' list ever since; nominally down to a scene describing sexual awakening, and another depicting a father euthanising his own baby, but Lowry had her own ideas about why parents would call for it to be banned. In simple terms, it asks its readers to question authority, and ultimately challenge it if the situation demands.

A similar message runs through virtually every YA book in the post-*Hunger Games* world, and yet Lowry has never seemed comfortable when placed alongside them. Violence, she has argued, is fundamental to their appeal, where *The Giver*, for all the times it has been challenged, uses it in a way that most would now consider tame.

"I have grandsons who are now 11 and 14, and sometimes we go to the movies together," she said to *Entertainment Weekly*. "And I find myself covering my eyes when people are being destroyed in various terrible ways, and the boys don't care. They've seen it a thousand times."

"If *The Giver* had been published this year, maybe no publisher would have wanted it because it's, it's... tame compared to the others. Would it have been controversial? I suspect not, because those people who are out there sharpening their knives and waiting to pounce on a book have plenty to choose from now." ✍



The Hunger Games, indebted to *The Giver*, sparked a YA revolution.



Which sub-genre
would you like to
see tackled next?

Let us know on Twitter
or Facebook



A Beginner's Guide To

Time travel

It's about time you got
into time-travel sci-fi

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

Time travel may seem like a new concept. The ideas behind it seem to develop as science does, after all.

But books have been traversing timelines forwards, backwards and sideways for decades. Each new story has a different method, motivation and story.

Perhaps the most common theme explored in time travel fiction is the need to change the past. Characters rarely go back in time for a laugh; they almost always have the good of mankind or cold, hard revenge on their minds when they do it. Some want to go back and kill Hitler. Others want to go back and stop Stalin's parents from meeting. Occasionally, a time traveller will change to past by accident, and spend the rest of their time there attempting to fix it.

Sometimes, characters don't even need to get off their couches to be affected by time travel. Authors often use communication from the future as a plot device, like in HG Wells' short story *The Queer Story Of Brownlow's Newspaper*, which features a man who accidentally receives a newspaper from 40

years in the future. It seems like something as simple as that (excluding the technicalities of transporting a paper from 1971 to 1931) could impact a life so much, but would you be able to forget what you'd read and carry on with life after something like that?

But time travel isn't always a physical thing. Precognition is a well-

explored element of the sub-genre, with JB Priestley touching on the idea in his book *Man And Time*, in which the protagonist gets a glimpse into the future through a dream.

Things go wrong a heck of a lot in this particular sub-genre. We haven't even touched upon the *paradoxes* and the *butterfly effects* time travel can create.



Like many books in the genre, films like *Back To The Future* have authors like Wells to thank for their popularity.

Classic time travel paradoxes to ponder

Ontological/Bootstrap paradox



Bootstrap, as in 'pulling yourself up by your bootstrap'. The time traveller sends his or herself useful information with no outside source. Surely the information would have no origin? You can't copy down information to then give to the originator of it; it just wouldn't work.



Polchinski's paradox

Joseph Polchinski raised the following paradoxical situation in 1990: if a billiard ball was sent through a wormhole back in time and exited the wormhole at the same angle, would it knock itself off course and thus stop itself from entering the wormhole in the first place?



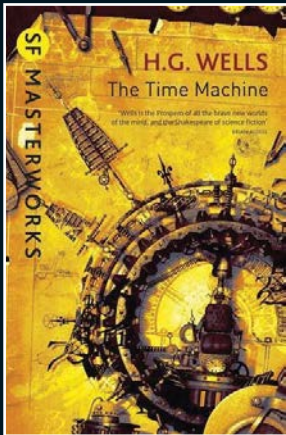
Predestination paradox

Someone goes back in time to stop a catastrophic event happening, but in doing so accidentally causes the event themselves. But if they caused the event, then what would end up inspiring them to go back in time to fix it? These just get curiously and curiously.



Temporal paradox

It's that age-old, "if a time traveller goes back in time and kills their grandfather, preventing themselves from being born, there would be no one to go back in time to kill their grandfather." It's a never-ending loop of 'this makes no sense.'



The best of times

Also the worst of times

THE TIME MACHINE
Author: H.G. Wells
Publisher: Gollancz
Published: 1895
Price: £8.99

As one of the most famous (and possibly the best) time-travel books out there, H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* is a great place to start if you are new to the subgenre and are looking for a way in. A few authors touched upon time travel in their work before Wells did, but he was the one to really popularise the concept, and moved it into the public imagination. It's quite a big jump too – the Victorian era all the way to 802,171 AD. Not bad for 1895.

“One of my favourite HG Wells books. Would love to travel back and read it for the 1st time again.”
 @safcinexile



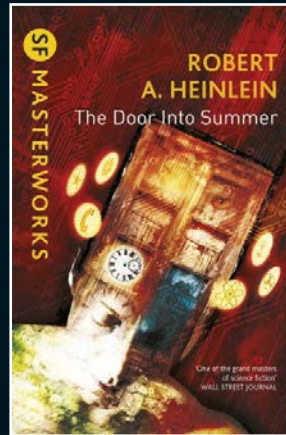
War of the world

The famous five

SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE
Author: Kurt Vonnegut
Publisher: Vintage Classics
Published: 1969
Price: £8.99

This one is a classic for a reason. *Slaughterhouse-Five* is simultaneously funny, bitter and touching as it follows the life of prisoner of war, optometrist and time-traveller Billy Pilgrim. The story that unfolds revolves around the infamous fire-bombing of Dresden during World War II, and Vonnegut's satirical look at the event is just one of the reasons *Slaughterhouse-Five* has often been hailed as one of the greatest anti-war books of all time.

“I felt the message was perfect + it dealt with time travel in a fun way with none of the shenanigans”
 @neil_bomb



Go to sleep

30 years down the line

THE DOOR INTO SUMMER
Author: Robert A. Heinlein
Publisher: Gollancz
Published: 1957
Price: £12.99

Heinlein's *The Door Into Summer* takes a look at another exciting aspect of time travel: suspended animation. When Dan Davis' life falls apart, thanks to his conniving business associates and his double-crossing lover, he reckons things might be better for him 30 years in the future. Dan undergoes the Long Sleep and wakes up in the 21st century, but when things in the future don't add up, Dan needs to find a way to go back to where he started.

“Great read, ideal for Heinlein newbie. #1 on my top-10 Classic SF novels, seminal time-travel story.”
 @wildwilyc



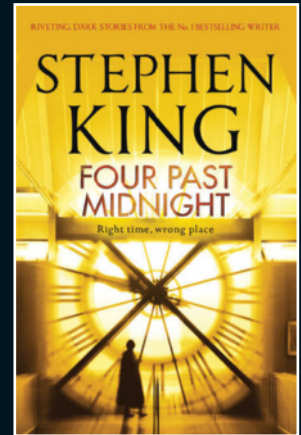
Left behind

Lovers to strangers

THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE
Author: Audrey Niffenegger
Publisher: Vintage
Published: 2003
Price: £8.99

Things get a bit less sciency and a lot more emotional in this debut novel from Niffenegger. Henry, born in 1963, suffers from a genetic disorder called Chrono-Impairment that causes him to time travel involuntary and without warning. The book follows his relationship with his wife Clare, an artist, and the strain his condition has on their marriage. When Henry first meets Clare she is a stranger, but she's known him almost all her life.

“I thought it was a really amazing, emotional love story, with an intriguing angle, even with an ending that I thought was off.” @Harlegator68



King of all genres

Horror meets time travel

THE LANGOLIERS (FOUR PAST MIDNIGHT)
Author: Stephen King
Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton
Published: 1960
Price: £6.99

If you often don't have, uh, time to get through a whole novel, but still want in on that sweet time travel nectar, you should try Stephen King's mind-bending novella, *The Langoliers*, which is featured in his collection book *Four Past Midnight*. King does a terrific job of making time travel not only baffling, but nail biting. He frequently mixes large, juicy dollops of horror into the sci-fi tale, creating a delicious sub-genre fondue.

“I read it years ago when I first started getting into King, would love to read it again to join in :)”
 @KingRichard76



Films like *Safety Not Guaranteed* prove that time travel is still going strong.



The Langoliers miniseries (1995) was inspired by Stephen King's novella of the same name.



The Time Machine's humanoid subspecies Morlocks have become quite iconic over the years.



Your Five best ghost stories



CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE
@SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



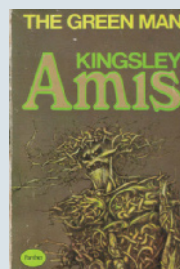
1. Bag of Bones

"Bag Of Bones by @StephenKing My favourite of his novels with chillingly believable encounters with the 'other side'. #BookClub" @mickeyralph



2. The Haunting of Hill House

"The Haunting Of Hill House by Shirley Jackson, because it's authentically chilling and claustrophobic. #BookClub" @VonSpacebee



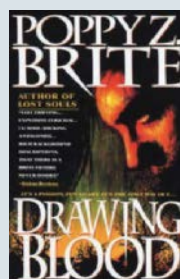
3. The Green Man

"Funny + scary + unreliable (b/c drunk) narrator + English folk horror. #BookClub" @AnneBillson



4. The Ghosts of Sleath

"Followed closely by Joe Hill's Heart Shaped Box both gave me nightmares! #BookClub" @vickycray



5. Drawing Blood

"Because I'm a little weirdo. Also because it's spooky, sexy and there's a Charlie Parker dream sequence. #BookClub" @teriwolfpants

Details Author: Jason Arnopp Publisher: Orbit Price: £8.99 Released: 28 July

THE LAST DAYS OF JACK SPARKS

I want to believe

An avowed sceptic gets a rude awakening in Jason Arnopp's clever, hilarious and scary debut novel, which blends immersion journalism and a host of horror sub-genres to great effect.

Jack's a celebrity journalist. He's also obnoxious, egotistical and, as the title would suggest, very much dead. An introduction from Jack's disapproving brother Alastair provides some context and explains the work-in-progress nature of the text. Jack's big idea was that he would travel the world in search of the supernatural, looking for proof.

After being openly scornful during the exorcism of a young girl in Italy, Jack receives a link to a creepy YouTube video that looks genuine. As he sets out to find the clip's origin, Jack starts inching closer to the proof that he's looking for, and he's not going to like it.

Starting as a very convincing and very funny riff on the kind of memoir journalism/immersion reporting that has made for so many great Christmas presents over the years, the novel is

immediately compelling. Jack's a great central character. He's a dick, but he's great company: arrogant, aggressive and egomaniacal, while the little notes to his editor show that he's aware of his own persona, and he's got a point when it comes to shysters taking advantage of the gullible and the vulnerable.

When things take a turn for the supernatural, the novel is genuinely scary. Arnopp's love of horror is clear in the details of the exorcisms, hauntings and spirit channelling, and he shows tremendous skill in creating an atmosphere and handling the big set pieces. Given that we know things aren't going to end well for Jack, each of his barbed comments about fakery and delusion carries an ominous weight.

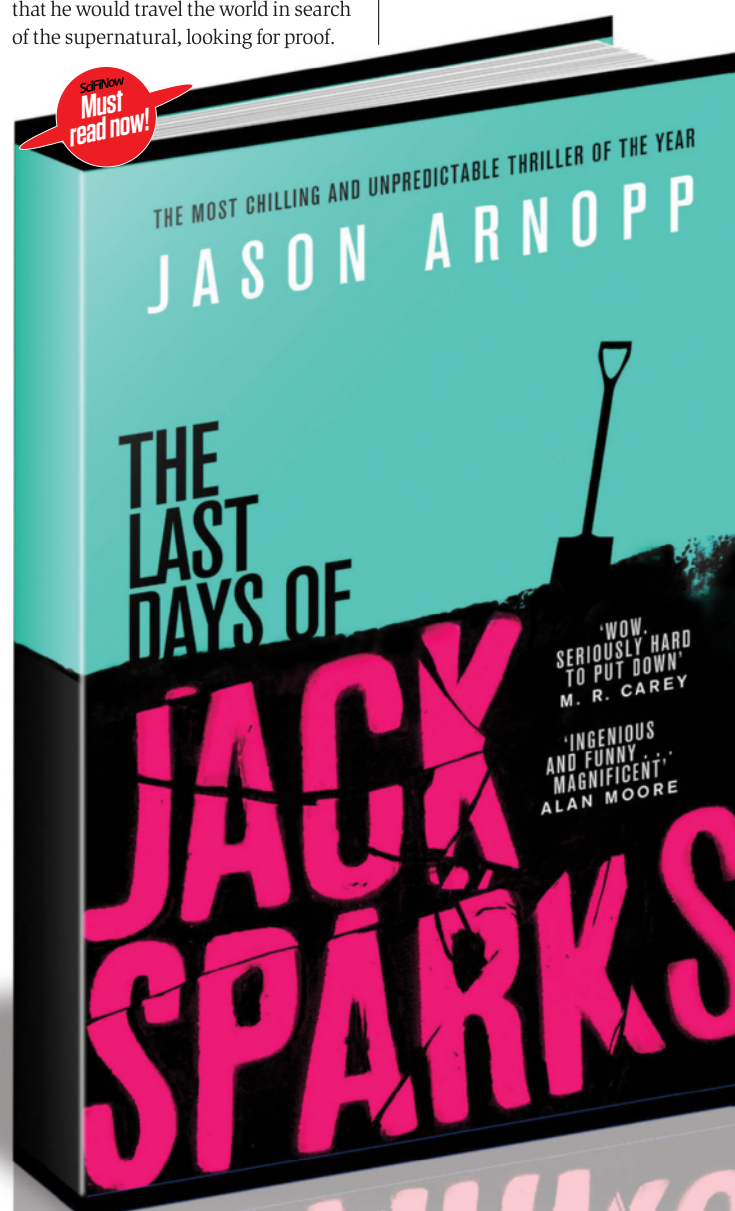
Jack shuttles from Hong Kong – where he faces a possible spectre with no-bullshit combat magician Jessica Chastain – to LA, where he reluctantly teams up with a bunch of paranormal 'experts', who mostly seem to be as obnoxious and self-obsessed as he is.

As it progresses, we start to get more snippets from third parties who pull back the curtain on Jack's version of events and make everything seem more real. Alastair lets us know which of Jack's stories about his past are true (although he may not be trustworthy), but it's Jack's flatmate Bex who benefits the most from these interludes.

It's not just the ego of the immovable sceptic that gets a kicking in this novel; it's the ego of the writer who positions himself at the centre of the universe and treats the people around him as characters in his story.

There's some impressive balancing of tones and sympathies here, but the most important thing to tell you about *The Last Days Of Jack Sparks* is that it's excellent, and you need to read it ASAP.

Jonathan Hatfull



SciFiNow scored **9** for
The Last Days Of Jack Sparks
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
John Dies At The End
David Wong
Wong blends humour and horror beautifully in this wonderfully weird slacker gem.



Details Author: M Suddain Publisher: Jonathan Cape Price: £14.99 Released: Out now

HUNTERS & COLLECTORS

Sharp like a knife

"To me, the greatest possible horror is not that humanity might end, but that our Empire of Stupidity might last forever." Never has a truer phrase been spoken by narrator and acerbic restaurant critic Jonathan Salvador Tamberlain, better known as "The

Tomahawk' to his admiring fans. He nails the rage of a society ruled by the elite, who manipulate the weak for their own means.

We meet Jonathan at the start of his quest to dine at the Undersea restaurant in Hotel Grand Skies, the Empyrean, after he receives a mysterious photo of the establishment. He's full of intrigue as he embarks on this ambitious search. Upon his arrival, things take a turn for the weird, with battle commencing between guests and hotel staff.

It's all bonkers and compelling, as Suddain guides the reader through a claustrophobic and manic stay in a grand setting via Jonathan's distinct musings. Aside from being packed full of stimulating ideas and smart observations, Suddain's turn of phrase conjures an exhilarating ambience of chaos. Dense passages often end with one perfect line or quip of scathing humour akin to Stewart Lee's biting satirical worldview. Previous comparisons to Douglas Adams witty wordplay are entirely fitting.



SciFiNow
Must
read now!

The mash-up of gory detail, sci-fi and dystopian horror are blended harmoniously as Suddain switches between frank letters to fans and family, revealing magazine articles, candid critics' notes and transcripts. Suddain also weaves a strangely moving relationship between Jonathan and Gladys with a back and forth of explicit cussing and violent altercations. Their back stories are shaded in with a deft hand to ensure the novel's denouement has impact.

The frenzied nature of the writing may prove a challenge to some, but Suddain captures the surreal desperation of the modern world with a sharp eye.

Katherine McLaughlin

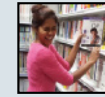
SciFiNow scored 8 for
Hunters & Collectors
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy
Douglas Adams
The romp across the universe with the sole surviving human is always worth a read.

YOUR READS

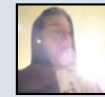
What you lot have been reading this month



"Best Served Cold by #JoeAbercrombie. My 4th Joe Abercrombie in a row! #BookClub"
@LibraryTasha



"Just about to start the second *Star Wars Aftermath* novel, *Life Debt* by Chuck Windig. Hope it's better than the first one! #BookClub"
@Carroller2019



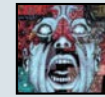
"Hope And Red. Picked it up off the back of your review. 1 chapter in, intrigued... #BookClub #BookClub"
@HamSpanner



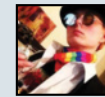
"Joelle Charbonneau's 2013 *The Testing*. Interesting pacing. But so far, it keeps going off the path of predictability #BookClub" @brencurry



"The Letters Of William Burroughs. Suitably trippy and slightly bonkers. Great fun. #BookClub"
@TheCorvidArcher



"Re-reading @grantmorrison run on *Doom Patrol*! #BookClub"
@comicbooknigel



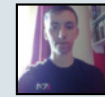
"Fight Club 2. The snark is delicious, if it is a bit of a retreat in places. #BookClub"
@DrKCoughton



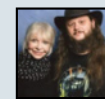
"Just started *Ninefox* *Gambit* and it's sooo goooood. #BookClub"
@parodyofvirtue



"Station Eleven and its really gripping. #BookClub"
@jhenrybenmore



"Read *Rat Queens* Volume 2 and it's better than the first volume. #BookClub"
@Jbarnes532



"World Of Warcraft *Chronicle* Volume 1, it is most awesome!! #BookClub"
@RockingRhys

Tell us what you're reading
on Twitter or Facebook

Details Author: Ben H Winters Publisher: Quirk Books Price: £11.99 Released: Out now

UNDERGROUND AIRLINES

Racism reimaged

Underground Airlines is an almost painfully timely novel. In the wake of disingenuous Brexit campaigns, #BlackLivesMatter and Donald Trump's wall-building plans, an alternate history story that tackles the thorny issue of race relations feels all too relevant. Don't be put off by the politics – it's also a compelling thriller with a complex hero.

Victor – aka Jim, or Brother, or any of a dozen other aliases he uses – is a soul catcher. In an alternate version of the US where the Civil War didn't happen, slavery still exists.

A former slave himself, Victor is employed by the US Marshals to track escaped slaves and return them to their owners. It's a job he excels at even as it eats away at his conscience, so when he sees a chance

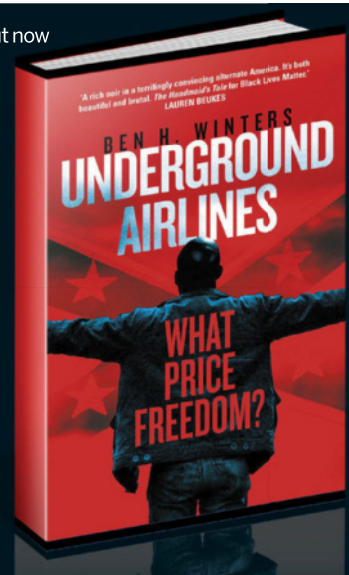
to escape through catching a particularly important runaway, he jumps at it. Inevitably, things aren't that simple, and 'freedom' becomes ever more complicated.

The world building in this novel is fascinating. Removing the abolition of slavery from US history doesn't change everything, but it changes enough: the relationship between the US and the rest of the world has shifted, while the country itself is less united than it should be.

The characters, too, are well drawn and hugely sympathetic; everyone Victor encounters is fighting a battle of one kind or another, nothing is easy.

The best genre fiction reflects reality, and offers either a warning or a promise about how life could be. It is both distressing and provides a glimmer of hope.

Sarah Dobbs



SciFiNow scored 7 for
Underground Airlines
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
The Man In The High Castle
Philip K. Dick
An alternate history story where the Allies lost WW2, recently adapted into an Amazon TV series.



Details Author: Anthony Ryan Publisher: Orbit Price: £18.99 Released: Out now

THE WAKING FIRE

Here be dragons!

With special thanks to George RR Martin, dragon-lit is on the rise, and we just can't seem to get enough of it. With that in mind, please welcome book one of *The Draconis Memoria*, *The Waking Fire*, a hybrid of piratey adventure, undercover espionage, a myth-chasing road trip, and plenty of dragons. Said beasts come in a variety of colours, and their blood is a precious commodity in The Continent of Arradisia.

A random selection of the population known as 'blood blessed' are able to harness increased abilities after ingesting the blood harvested from the red, green, blue or black drakes (those not well-versed in the dragon lingo, don't mistake these rather dangerous creatures for the adult male duck. Your interpretation of events may seem a little farcical otherwise).

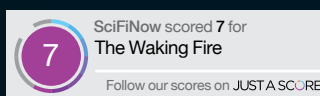
With the bloodline fading, the threat of war is imminent. Unless the Ironship Trading Syndicate can convince petty thief and unregistered

blood blessed Clay Torcreek to track down a fabled white drake. Clay's quest (one of which he feels somewhat bullied into), as well as that of the two other central characters unfolds in alternating chapters, some of which are thrilling to read, and others too dull to mention.

There are some fairly hideous minor characters and a few juicy little plot twists, some of which you may see coming, while others will knock you sideways. The plot does seem a little weak at times, and with so many threads to follow it takes full concentration to remember whether you're on land, sea or air. However, the steampunk-tinged world that Ryan has created for his new dragon adventure is a joy to visualise, and with a little time and patience it is worth the investment.

This is a series that Spielberg, Disney et al would be foolish not to get their film making hands on. If you listen very carefully you can almost hear John Williams tuning up his orchestra.

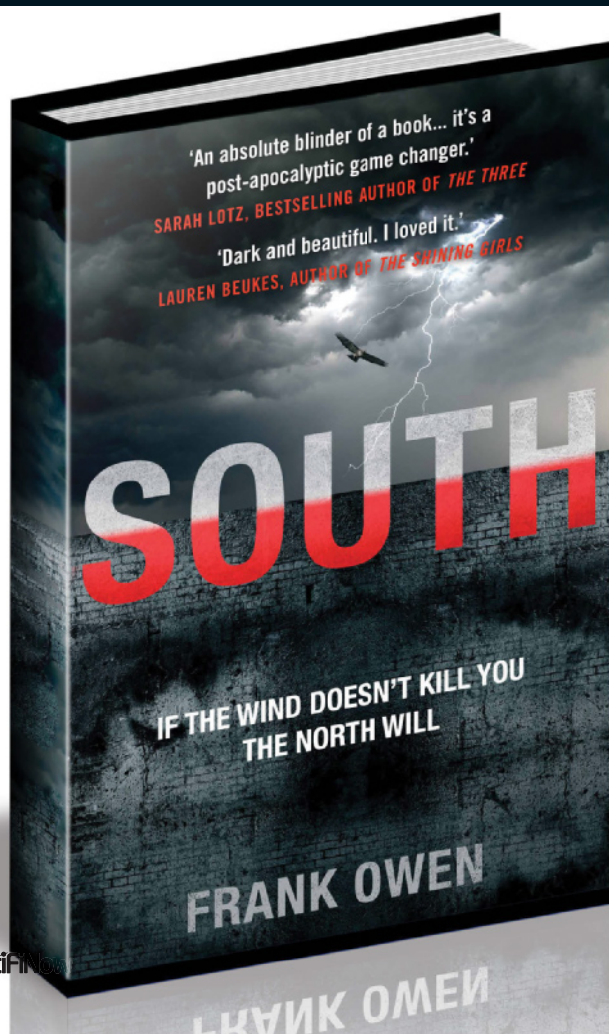
Claire Nicholls



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Summer Dragon
Todd Lockwood

A rare dragon appears in a sleepy valley, thought to be an omen of change.



Details Author: Frank Owen Publisher: Corvus Price: £12.99 Released: Out now

SOUTH The north remembers

In an alternate USA that has become a lawless wasteland thanks to a devastating virus unleashed by the North during a second Civil War, its southern residents do their best to navigate a world that has gone to hell. Among them are brothers Dyce and Garrett, who are fleeing the redneck hillbilly Callahan clan, and lone traveller Vida, who has her own quest to complete – one that will see her crash headlong into the two brothers and change all their lives.

Slow-burning for a post-apocalyptic story, little is given away early on in *South*, allowing readers to draw their own conclusions about why the world has ended up this way. Little is given away about the core characters apart from what's driving them; their back stories are embellished upon throughout.

But while other similar stories aren't afraid to show a little light, *South* is almost always dark, as if determined to show the consequences of humanity forgetting itself. Much of this is demonstrated by disclosed origins of

this new world disorder, caused largely by the emergence of a hate-filled, ultra-isolationist new political party. Scarily relevant doesn't cover it.

Even more scarily, there is no answer. Once humanity has damned itself, that is it. There's no help, and all that's left is for us to face the consequences.

This sense of dread is maintained with efficiency, designed as an origin tale upon which to nail the basis for future stories, it does feel like something's missing here, as if it is only a third of a complete tale. Still, if this is intended as an origin story then we can safely say that it's job well done on that front.

Steve Wright



SciFiNow scored 7 for
South

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Heroes And Villains
Angela Carter

Another successful take on struggling civilisation in a world gone to hell by the famously feminist writer.

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How would you pitch *The GoneGod World* to a potential reader?

I guess I would start with the premise: The gods are gone. All of them. Their last message to humanity was, "Thank you for believing in us, but it is not enough. We're leaving. Good luck." At first no one took them seriously. Until, that is, all the denizens of all the heavens and hells started showing up on people's doorsteps. Creatures that were once thought of as myth are now refugees striving to adapt to life on Earth. Trouble is, after eons of living forever, they're not very good at being mortal.

How much fun was it to take all these creatures and characters from myths and folklore and throw them together?

It was intensely fun, to the point where I would be laughing to myself while plotting or writing at a café. The important thing for me, though, was making sure that I didn't just focus on Judeo-Christian creatures or the Greek mythological beings; I tried to bring in creatures from many cultures, faiths, time periods and traditions. That requires a lot of research – I say research, but what I really mean is a lot of brain candy. I now know so much about the weirdest beings you can imagine. Some of them are so unbelievable that they'll never make it into my books.

Do you remember your first encounter with genre fiction?

This will probably date me, but it was a movie called *The Flight Of Dragons*. I must have been five or six when I first watched it, and that set me on the path to love the fantasy genre. Since then, I have consumed everything I can get my hands on, from movies to playing D&D to books to comics. I just can't get enough, and I am very proud that I'm able to add to the genre in my own small way.



GoneGod World by RE Vance is available now on Amazon. Visit www.paradiselot.com for more info.

Details Author: Nina Allan Publisher: Titan Books Price: £7.99 Released: Out now

THE RACE

First to the finish?

In a world that is similar to our own, debut author Nina Allan has changed a few details about the planet we know in order to create her own, easy-to-grasp concept.

In the town of Sapphire, outside of London yet seemingly cut off from the rest of the world by the Romney Marshes, our first of four narrators, Jenna, lives in a place where genetically engineered dogs – or smartdogs as they are called in the novel – race like greyhounds connected to their runners.

Essentially this appears to be the main 'sci-fi' element of Jenna's part of the story, with the rest of her life revolving around her brother's failed drug-running and the kidnapping of his daughter because he couldn't keep up the payments. At one point he says to his sister, "I know what I'm doing," and you have to question whether or not he does.

After spending the first third of the book with Jenna, the rest of

the novel moves through the other three narrators. While Chrissy, Alex and Maree each have their own characters, their voices don't appear to be all too distinct. They speak in a similar manner, and the structure remains the same, leaving you with that sense of maybe the book would have had a tighter grip on your interest had they been a little bit more varied.

Alongside this, at times, the story can clunk, as the author switches between exposition and jumping back into the characters' pasts to set them up. It can sometimes be a little jarring, and if we're being honest, sometimes learning about their pasts is far more interesting than their presents – especially when it comes to Jenna and her brother, the latter of who it is difficult to feel anything for, even after his daughter goes missing.

It's a solid first effort from Allan, but any future outings could do with some structural tweaks.

Jan Neal



SciFiNow scored **5** for *The Race*
Follow our scores on JUSTASCORE.COM



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

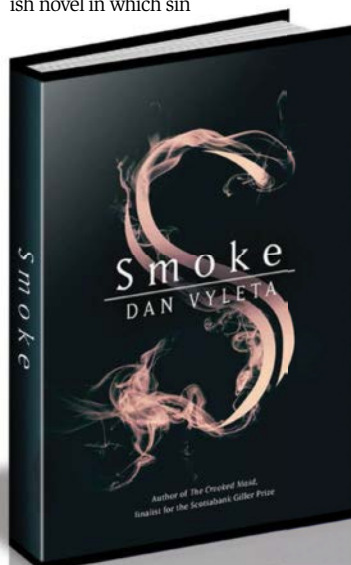
The Reality Dysfunction
Peter F. Hamilton
The human race finally realises its potential and gets to grips with genetic engineering.

Details Author: Dan Vyleta Publisher: W&N Price: £14.99 Released: Out now

SMOKE

Sin, visible

What if you lived in a world where every sinful thought you had manifested physically, for everyone to see? This is the driving concept of Dan Vyleta's Dickensian fantasy, a turn-of-the-century-ish novel in which sin



appears as intoxicating smoke pouring from a person's body. The wealthy and the well-to-do are properly educated to learn how to control themselves, while the poor live in great fogs of apparent decadence.

Thomas has never really fit in at his elite Oxford school, but when events conspire to take him and his good-hearted friend Charlie to the home of one of the leading Smoke scientists, they discover that there is more to Smoke than sin, and that the ruling classes may be using it to their advantage.

Vyleta's latest novel is hard to categorise. Comparisons to Phillip Pullman are justified, with a complex and rich alternate history combined with challenging philosophical concepts and a strong sense of place, and there's definitely a bit of China Miéville in there too.

The opening chapters, which take place at the historical school, have a feel of YA to it, but Vyleta does not talk down to the reader, and thank goodness for

that. It's dark stuff, not just in terms of violence, but in its broader themes.

Thomas and Charlie are soon joined by Lydia, a pious girl their age who has the wool pulled from her eyes, and the three make for an engaging lead trio. In fact, it's a novel teeming with fascinating characters. In keeping with the novel's themes, each has their public and private face, and each has some form of ulterior motive driving them.

There are important messages about how a society's hierarchy is kept in place, and the dangers of oppression and close-mindedness, but *Smoke* is also a vivid, imaginative and gripping fantasy thriller.

Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **8** for *Smoke*
Follow our scores on JUSTASCORE.COM



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Northern Lights
Philip Pullman
The opening novel in Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy is a superb introduction to a stunning and complex world.

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KRISTANNA LOKEN
TERMINATOR 3



COLIN BAKER
DOCTOR WHO



JACQUELINE PEARCE
BLAKES 7



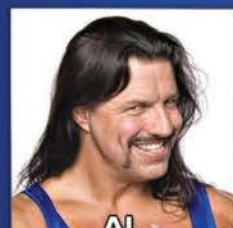
SEAN ASTIN
LORD OF THE RINGS
THE GOONIES



AUTOGRAPHS

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FREE TALKS



AL SNOW
WRESTLER



MARGOT KIDDER
SUPERMAN



KE HUY QUAN
GOONIES, INDY



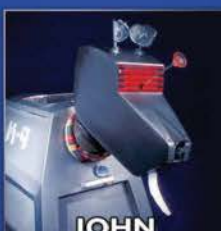
GAMING

MASQUERADE

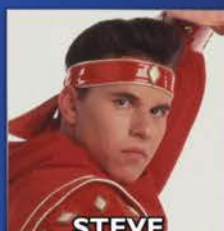
AND MORE!



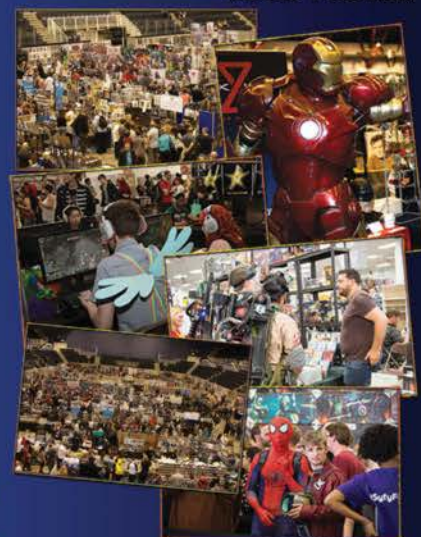
JOHN CHALLIS
ONLY FOOLS & HORSES



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Wrapped up in books

Inside The Folio Society's latest wonders

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

The Folio Society is responsible for a treasure trove of beautifully crafted, illustrated and bound editions of a wide range of classics, and it's a great time to be a genre fan. Their recent releases include three of sci-fi, fantasy and horror's finest works: Arthur C Clarke's visionary *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Stephen King's horrifying *The Shining*, and Terry Pratchett's wonderful *Mort*. With new illustrations, introductions and gorgeous bindings, these books have never looked so good.

We asked Tom Walker, The Folio Society's editorial director, to take us through the new editions of these three masterpieces.

1 *2001: A Space Odyssey*

Author: Arthur C Clarke **Illustrated by:** Joe Wilson

Introduced by: Michael Moorcock

"This is undoubtedly one of the greatest and most influential science fiction novels ever written, and because of its philosophical bent and early interest in such questions as artificial intelligence, it widened the appeal of the SF genre itself. The novel has largely been overshadowed by the 1968 film, so to an extent this is a discovery book for many readers. The wonderful thing about it though is quite how crafted and well-paced it is. Clarke is an excellent writer who can relate a superb story, create tension and expose character, whilst at the same time releasing a stream of philosophical questions which make this novel riveting. Somehow, right up until the fantasia of the final chapters, the story is believable, which is some feat."

Illustration by Joe Wilson from The Folio Society edition of *2001: A Space Odyssey*

2 *The Shining*

Author: Stephen King **Illustrated by:** Edward Kinsella

"Written in 1977 and made into a feature film in 1980, *The Shining* is arguably the greatest work of supernatural horror of the 20th century. Perhaps Stephen King's most iconic novel, it was crying out to be illustrated. Award-winning illustrator Edward Kinsella has remained true to the book with his terrifying and inhuman works."

Illustrations by Edward Kinsella from The Folio Society edition of *The Shining*

3 *Mort*

Author: Terry Pratchett **Illustrated by:** Omar Rayyan

Introduced by: AS Byatt

"Publishing Pratchett is something of a departure for us, and a very exciting one, but to an extent the ground has been established already with our growing fantasy and humour list. He is, I think, a terrific writer: laugh-out-loud comic, subtle, humane – a true storyteller, and a joy to read. Pratchett is the master of his genre and undoubtedly deserves to be published in a canonical list."

Illustrations by Omar Rayyan from The Folio Society edition of *Mort*





2



3



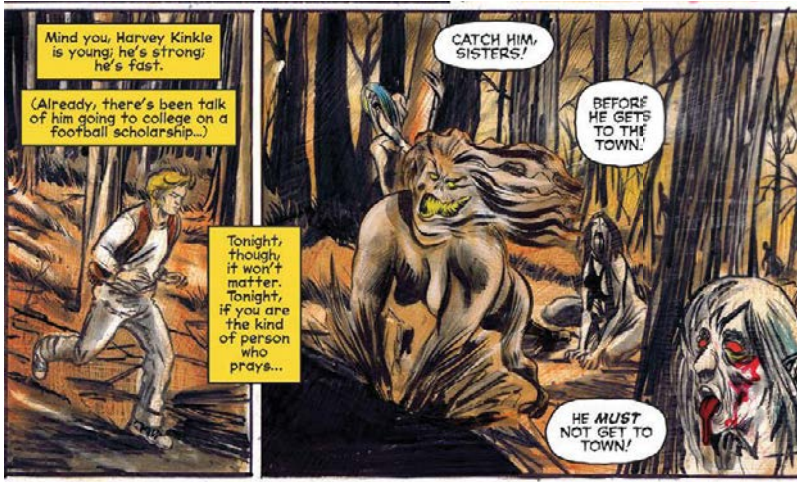
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BOOK CLUB

Chilling Adventures Of Sabrina



Details Writer: Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa Artist: Robert Hack Publisher: Archie Comics
Price: £13.99 Released: 18 August

CHILLING ADVENTURES OF SABRINA

Something wicked this way comes

Everyone remembers the TV adventures of the teenage witch, living with her groovy aunts Zelda and Hilda, and the snarky familiar of Salem the Cat. Oh the hijinks of magic gone wrong and dates with Harvey Kinkle, such fun!

Sabrina originated in the pages of *Archie Comics* in 1962, living in the town of Greendale with her aunts and feline friend, and generally being much the same as she is in her TV incarnation. This comic is not that. Inspired by his other recent smash hit *Afterlife With Archie*, a zombie spin on the classic, Aguirre-Sacasa turned to the mythology of the teen witch.

Perhaps the darkest timeline of all *Archie* spin-offs, *Chilling Adventures* is set in a Sixties where dark magic is real, and witches prowl the woods. A young mother grabs her baby daughter and runs for her life, only to be caught by her husband and his wicked sisters. The mortal woman is condemned to insanity. The witch husband bound to another fate. And as for the sisters, they take little Sabrina home to raise her in the ways of their lord Satan.

Afterlife With Archie is horror of a sort, but punctuated by the humour that *Archie* fans know and love. *Chilling Adventures* is an entirely different offering, one of the most horrifying comics of recent years. Sure, the hint of humour is still there, but this is no light and breezy affair. From the hidden horrors of Mrs Spellman's fate to the cannibalistic nature of Zelda and Hilda, the pages are dripping with blood long before things start to go wrong for the teen witch.

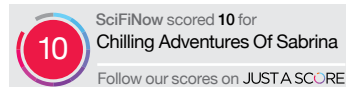
After a turbulent childhood, Sabrina finds calm from attending a normal school and sneaking in the odd bit of magic, but from the very beginning her aunts are training her for her pivotal 16th birthday the day she can give herself fully to Satan.

Unsurprisingly, Sabrina is no goody two-shoes, and thinks nothing of giving the cutest boy in school, one Harvey Kinkle, a magical nudge towards noticing her. This could be the moment when disaster began to be inescapable, but another faceless character from Sabrina's past roams the woods and plans far greater tragedy ahead. Madame Satan will not be spurned!

Hack is a revelation, colouring his own work for the first time. Drenched in sepia tones, his figures have a unique presence of depth. The sharp contrasts and browns of the wild woods have infected Sabrina's entire world, and even the retro setting invokes the spirit of the great rural horror films of the Sixties and early Seventies.

It is very hard to find horror comics that are actually scary. Too often the terror lies in what is unseen rather than what is visualised, leaving the medium somewhat disadvantaged. Hack and Aguirre-Sacasa completely flip that script, creating a comic that manages to disturb and frighten, and is certainly not advised for the faint of heart.

Laura Sneddon



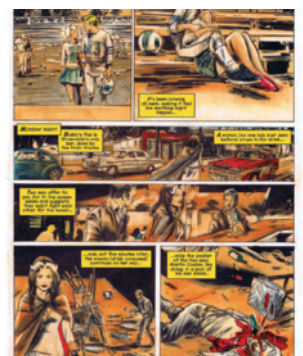
SciFiNow scored **10** for Chilling Adventures Of Sabrina

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Afterlife With Archie
Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa,
Francesco Francavilla
Further horrific mayhem from Archie's horror maestro.





Details Writers: Ulises Farinas, Erick Freitas Artists: Julien Dufour, Caitlin Rose Boyle et al Publisher: IDW Price: £18.99 Released: 25 August

AMAZING FOREST Wicked tales of the strange

Good anthology comics are hard to come by these days, but thankfully IDW is here to remind us of just how well suited the medium is to telling short stories with a sting in the tail.

Farinas is perhaps best known for his pencilling on *Judge Dredd: Mega-City Two*, but here he combines writing skills with that of Freitas to resurrect

what was once a digital-only comic into something of grander purpose.

A different artist brings each short story to life, with loose themes tying the various threads together without forcing any clichés. Some tales are stronger than others, but the quality and variety of the art alone catches the stragglers and boosts them to sit with their betters. The eerily clever 'Wolf Mother' and peacefully unsettling 'Space Night Sonata' are particular standouts.

At 208 pages, this book of the strange promises tremendous bang for your buck, tangling sci-fi, fantasy and horror to appeal to the darkest of imaginations.

Laura Sneddon



SciFiNow scored 7 for Amazing Forest
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Details Writer: Simon Spurrier Artists: Ryan Kelly, Nick Filardi, Lee Loughridge, Matt Wilson Publisher: Image Comics Price: £10.99 Released: 25 August

CRY HAVOC VOL 1: MYTHING IN ACTION Unleash the dogs of war

Werewolves are perhaps feeling a tad unloved of late, less 'beasts of terror' and more 'teen heartthrobs'. Lou isn't like the teen wolf of America though – she's a woman, for starters, gay, and determined to get rid of the beast within.

Spinning on an innovation first seen in Rafael Albuquerque's *Ei8ht*,

Cry Havoc differentiates between three time periods in Lou's life by the use of a unique artist for each one: Filardi handles her London past, her relationship and how she became a werewolf; Wilson takes on her Afghanistan present, where she works as a supernatural mercenary to earn her cure; and Loughridge sets the tone of Lou's imprisonment in the Red Place.

On one level, *Cry Havoc* is about a supernatural creatures with guns. But that is merely the sexy surface of a story that digs deep into the whys of what myths really are to us in our world of control and chaos.

Laura Sneddon



SciFiNow scored 8 for Cry Havoc Vol 1: Mything In Action
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Details Writer: David Baillie Artist: Meghan Hetrick Publisher: Vertigo Price: £10.99 Released: 11 August

RED THORN VOL 1: GLASGOW KISS

Gaun yersell!

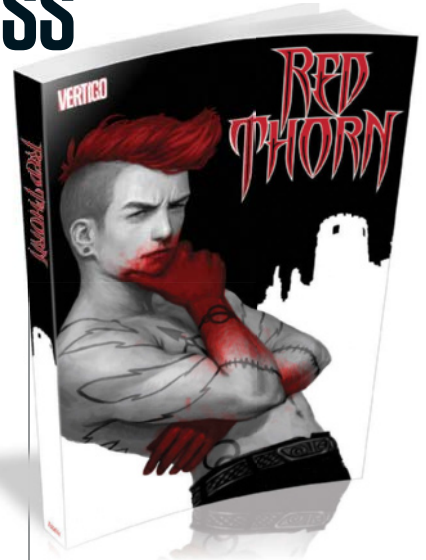
Red Thorn fully embraces the Glaswegian within, plunging fully into Scottish mythology, the rainy city and the Loch Ness Monster.

Isla Mackintosh has travelled from the US in an attempt to track down her sister, who disappeared in the Borders. A keen artist, Isla has long abandoned drawing people after the doodle of a perfect new friend came to life, enrolled in her school, and several weeks later brutally murdered a teacher.

Instead she draws monsters, things that aren't real, until passion for a new boyfriend drives her to draw a quick escape – a seemingly harmless act that opens the floodgates and starts her drawing a figure in chains. A person that she only sees in one other place: the newly returned sketchbook of her missing sister.

Baillie keeps the book light on exposition, moving his characters from one scene to another with little to no explanation. Entire sequences are missing, with Isla suddenly appearing in new places, or with new ideas.

Much of this is later explained, gaps filled in or sudden changes in demeanour made sense of. The first read is a tad jarring but rereads add depth to this madness and it is refreshing to read a comic that requires a bit of brainwork on the readers' end.



Thorn is a better-defined character, breezily embodying a god of mischief vibe with all the arrogance and secrecy that entails.

Rainy nights in Glasgow, the sun-filled Borders, intricate creature designs, expressive faces – Hetrick hits top marks all round as her slightly cartoonish and vibrant style makes the blood really pop.

Laura Sneddon

SciFiNow scored 7 for Red Thorn Vol 1: Glasgow Kiss
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Nameless
Grant Morrison, Chris Burnham, Nathan Fairbairn
Kicks off in Glasgow before heading to space with gruesome occultism.





BOOK CLUB

Marjorie Liu

**“I WANTED TO WRITE AN EPIC
FANTASY THAT DEALS WITH
ISSUES OF RACE AND FEMINISM”**
MARJORIE LIU





THE MONSTRESS WITHIN

We talk monsters and magic with Marjorie Liu

WORDS LAURA SNEDDON



A gorgeous new epic fantasy has burst onto the scene from the imaginations of Marvel maestros Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda at Image Comics. Just as *Saga* ushered in a new era of comics creativity, so too has *Monstress* and its monstrous protagonist, Maika. Liu gave us all the details.

Can you describe *Monstress* and how it came about?

Imagine an alternate Twenties Asia rife with magic and steampunk technology. A young woman who survived a cataclysmic war is searching for answers to her mother's murder, and all the while she has a psychic connection to a monster that is slowly deforming her. That's the simple pitch.

The actual narrative is far more complex. I wanted to tell a story about surviving war, slavery and one's own self-destructive tendencies. I wanted to write an epic fantasy set in a hybridic Asia – one that also happens to deal with issues of race and feminism.

I've always been fascinated with stories of 'otherness'. It never occurred to me as a kid to question why *Beauty And The Beast* resonated so strongly with me, or why any narrative involving monsters – of the misunderstood variety – were all I wanted to write about. Girls and monsters, monsters and girls: the stories I've been telling my whole life. But it makes sense now that I'm an adult. I was a mixed-race kid who didn't have the language or space to talk about race, so I found other ways of resonating with my experiences.

Monstress was born from that use of fantasy to talk about hard things, and it was born from my fascination with monsters, and how our humanity as people of colour is so often erased. It comes from hearing my grandparents talk about World War II, and it comes from my love of epic fantasy and desire to see more female characters everywhere, doing everything. There are more influences, a whole life of influences, but that's a good place to start.

How did Takeda come on board, and what was your reaction to seeing her sketches and then her finished work?

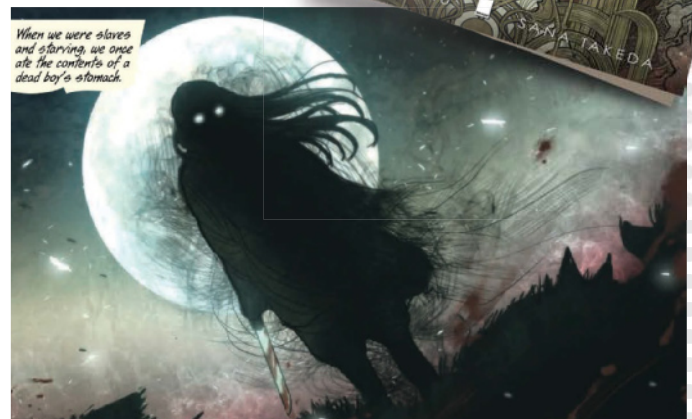
Sana and I had worked together on *X-23*, and even then I was completely taken with her style, storytelling and effortless ability to convey the power of really difficult emotional moments. I'm no artist, but my sense is that *X-23* isn't an easy character to draw – there's a stillness to her, a deliberate emptiness on the surface that's part of her mask – and Sana perfectly captured that about her character.

After *X-23*, there weren't any other opportunities at Marvel for Sana and me to collaborate, but I held out hope – I wanted to work with her again, badly. Some years rolled by, and the idea of doing a creator-owned book began to develop inside me. On a trip to Japan I met Sana for lunch, and brought up the possibility of collaborating. She said yes, but it took another year or so to really get the ball rolling on *Monstress*.

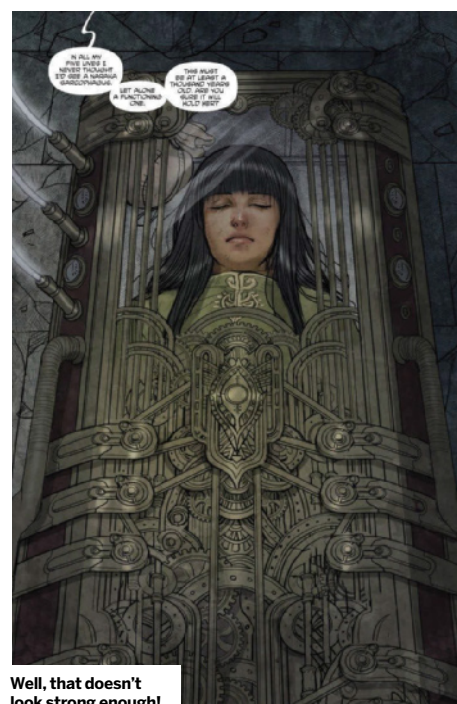
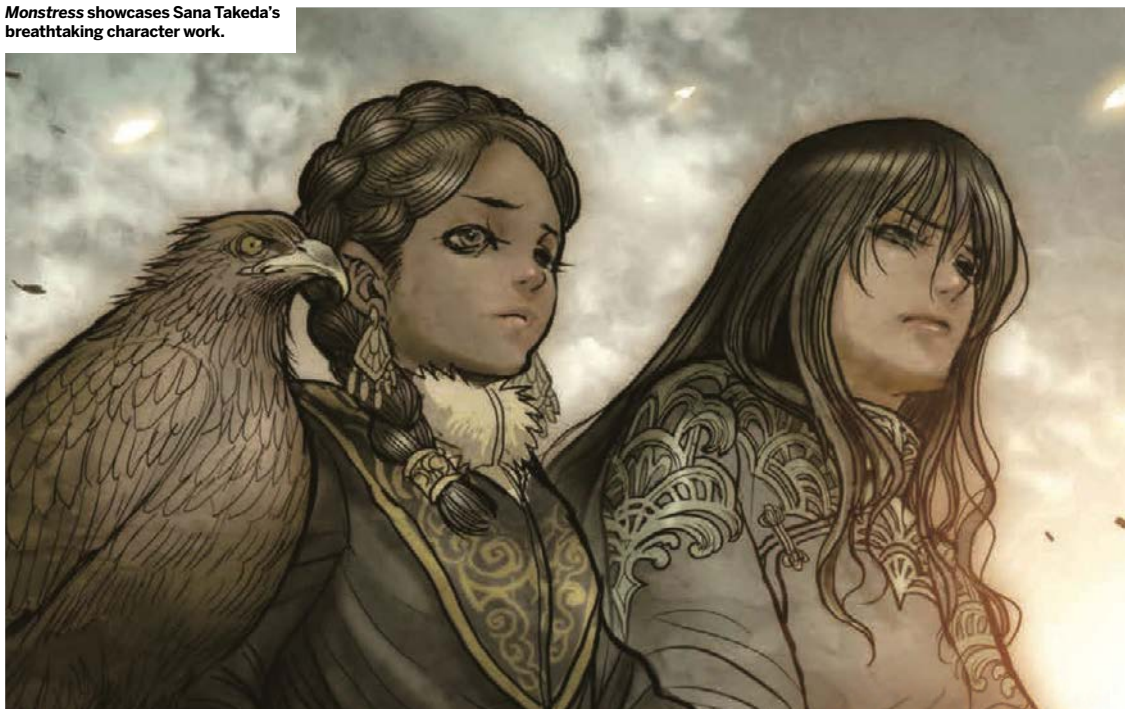
Before I started seeing Sana's sketches she said to me, "I want to change my style for this book... I want to do something different." And man, she did. I had always found her to be an incredible artist, but her work on *Monstress* has been sublime. Her initial sketches were raw and full of movement and life – and I would have been thrilled if that was all I'd gotten on this book – but then her finished work began rolling in, and I've just been in awe ever since. Writing for Sana and collaborating with her on *Monstress* has been one of the great creative joys of my life, and I'm constantly humbled not only by her talent, but by Sana's kindness and willingness to go all the way for this book.

One of the key themes is the tension between the various races. Is bigotry towards those who look different something that influences all your work?

Of course. We're living in a period (just one of many) when fear is being used as a weapon to exclude, deny, erase and dehumanise – and for what purpose? ➤



Monstress showcases Sana Takeda's breathtaking character work.



Well, that doesn't look strong enough!

➤ Some fantasy that doing all these things will make certain lives better and safer? That countries as a whole will be stronger if they commit to these practices, whose underlying core value is little more than racism? When has that ever worked? And yet we keep making the same mistakes over and over – we keep burying those bodies, we keep building those fences.

It's easier to digest such things in fiction, especially under the guise of the fantastic. Tell an outright realistic story of war and bigotry and slavery, and readers might look away – but tell the same story using witches, talking cats and animal-human hybrids? Now maybe you've gotten them to pay attention.

Where do you get your inspiration for the world you built from?

The first draft of *Monstress* looked very different from the world you see now, and it took time and a lot of experimentation to start fitting the pieces together. Sometimes you need to have a lot of patience with the process, you have to be willing to flail around in the dark with no real sense of what you're doing – just the faith that you'll figure it out. My inspiration came from many sources: Japanese and Chinese mythology, Kaiju movies (*Godzilla* forever!), the collective history of Asia, WW2 in the Pacific, fashion and architectural magazines. A flat-out crazy streak can't be discounted either. Also, Sana Takeda. She inspires endlessly.

You write both novels and comic books – what was it about *Monstress* that prompted you to write it in comic form?

“WOMEN ARE HALF THE WORLD... WOMEN HAVE MADE THIS WORLD IN WAYS THAT ARE NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED OR VALUED”
MARJORIE LIU

Before I started writing comics, all I knew was prose. All I understood about storytelling – on a personal, creative level – was limited to one medium. That's fine – there's tremendous narrative flexibility and power in novels and short fiction – but without realising it, I think I'd begun to hit a particular ceiling with some of my more fantastical ideas; stories I was hungry to tell, but that never seemed to sit right on the page. It wasn't until I began writing comics and grew comfortable with this medium that I had a realisation: those ideas I'd had such difficulty with would work better as a comic.

The power of visual narratives is immense, and it offers opportunities to go places that can sometimes be more difficult in prose. I could have written *Monstress* as a novel, but so much would have been lost in translation from my mind to the page. Describing the Monstrum, for example: a thousand words would paint a picture, but not *the* picture. And in this case, having *the* picture was important to me: specificity was essential to conveying the narrative and building the world.

The cast of characters is hugely diverse. How did the characters come about, both in idea and design, and how important is diversity to you in your stories?



Diversity is life, both literally and figuratively. Women are life, both literally and figuratively. And both these things are all too often erased from our popular narratives, or deformed in really unpleasant ways. I am a mixed-race Chinese-American woman, and the representations I see of myself are few and far between. I was tired of that. And as a storyteller, it was within my power to do something about it. I wanted to tell a story where it was just women, just women of colour, of every shape and size and background, because why not? Women are half the world, but you'd never know it from watching television and film. Women have made this world in ways that are never acknowledged or valued.

There's a lot of horror in *Monstress*, held in contrast with the anger of Maika. Do the horrors of that world simply reflect our own internal and external horrors?

I'm a Pollyanna-esque optimist, which you'd probably never guess from reading my work. I've got a lot of hope for the human race – in the long term. But I also know we can be vile monsters, and that the history of humanity is buried in bodies that have been brutalised, enslaved and treated like trash. That's our past, our present and our immediate future – all over this world. So yeah, there's horror in *Monstress* – but it's a very specific horror related to the question of war: how do we dehumanise others so that we can be better at murdering them? How do we dehumanise others so we can treat their bodies like commodities?

This dehumanisation is nothing but a set of complex narratives that folks (and



cultures) tell themselves so they can sleep at night and feel powerful and right.

For example, what readers encounter in *Monstress* #1 when the Cumaeen witch-nuns are experimenting on the bodies of murdered children is nothing more than what was done by Nazi and Japanese doctors and scientists in WW2, but in the context of the fantastic. Speculative fiction makes certain truths much easier to swallow.

Maika has a lot of anger, but angry women are often chastised in our media and society as being 'hysterical', or on the other hand for being too 'Mary Sue'. How did you craft Maika as such a strong, awful and sympathetic character?

We're not accustomed to allowing women to be flawed, imperfect people. We're not accustomed to giving women the space to express the full range of emotions and imperfections that men are permitted. Take, for example, the recent television series, *The Night Manager*. I've only seen the first two episodes, but I love it and enjoy it. Jonathan Pine is a great character. But imagine if that role was played by a woman: former military, running from life, decides to help and protect the young male paramour of a fantastically powerful and sadistic woman – only to have it all end tragically, which sets in motion the wheels of fate that send this woman (let's call her Jenna Pine) on a path that will have her going deep undercover in the organisation of the most ruthless female arms dealer in the world. So deep undercover, in fact, that she must become a criminal herself, a sociopath, in order to get the revenge she so desperately desires.

Imagine *that*. Imagine that gender reversal. Imagine if all those characters were portrayed by women of colour. And tell me the scales are weighted equally for women and how we're represented. As far as I can tell we've got a limited range of acceptable roles: virgin, mother, whore, with a couple hybrids and variations and a few outliers. But that's it.

So how did I craft Maika? I asked myself, "Hey, if your mother had been murdered and you'd been enslaved in a terrible war, how would you feel?" and started from there, with absolutely no bullshit. It was hard, though. It was hard writing Maika and going to those dark places in her character. It's still hard, but it had to be done. Maika is not a nice person, but why would she be? Why do we *have* to be nice? Being nice doesn't make people good.

Balancing the horror there are two characters in particular – Master Ren and Kippa – who bring an adorable amount of cuteness to the story. How were the

developed, and did Sana's art have an influence on their importance? Were the adorable lessons of Professor Tam Tam in the back pages always planned?

Sana gets almost all the credit for Kippa. I never envisioned her as a major character – or even a character. I just needed some background Arcanic children for a couple scenes and said, "Make one of them a fox girl." And then Sana, of course, drew the most amazing, adorable fox girl *ever* – and that was pretty much all it took to bring Kippa into the book like a force of nature.

That happens a lot between Sana and me. I'll need someone to dress up a scene – no big deal – and Sana will create the most amazing character design ever, and suddenly this previously uninteresting window-dressing has a vital role in the world and story. It's pretty much the best thing ever to get a surprise like that.

I knew I wanted talking cats in the book, and that they had to be physically different (hence the multiple tails), but as with all the characters, Sana has taken those cat designs to a whole new level beyond anything I imagined, which has inspired me to give them a far more vital role to the world of *Monstress* – which is already a vast

place. That's why Professor Tam Tam came into existence: to give us space in the book to create a secondary (but complementary) narrative that allows readers to access different parts of the world that they wouldn't necessarily get from Maika's story alone. The world of *Monstress* is huge – like, epic. And there was no reason to horde all that world-building and let it go to waste.

I always hate it when authors say, "Yeah, there was so much more I wanted to put in the book, but I didn't have the space." I've said those same words, but you know what? Now I have the space.

Finally, what else do you have in the world, and please say there is much more *Monstress* to come?

Ha! There is *much* more *Monstress* to come. I have no idea how long this book will run, but it'll be for quite some time. The next arc will see Maika at sea, exploring more of her past. It won't necessarily be lighter in tone, but readers will be given access to a completely different side of the world – there are mermaids and pirates, for a start (two of my favourite things). 🐾

Monstress is available to buy now.

Sleep with one eye open...



Future Imperfect

Essential new and beautiful fantasies

Mirror (Image Comics)

Emma Ríos, Hwei Lim

Tensions run high between the mage-scientists of The Synchronia and the talking animal residents of Izrah Colony in this fantasy.



The Spire (Boom! Studios)

Simon Spurrier, Jeff Stokely, André May

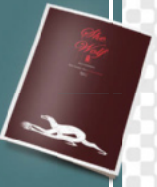
The bustling tower city of The Spire is thrown into chaos by a murder that tilts the power balance between humans and its countless non-human residents.



She Wolf (Image Comics)

Rich Tommaso

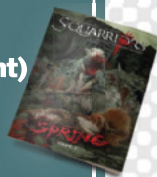
A teenage girl believes she has been bitten by a werewolf, and experiences savage fever dreams that confuse her reality.



Squarriors (Devil's Due Entertainment)

Ash Maczko, Ashley Witter

A world removed of humans is far from peaceful, as animal life struggles with the gift of intelligence and the struggle of instinct versus reason.



From Under Mountains (Image Comics)

Claire Gibson, Sloane Leong, Marian Churchland

The daughter of the ruling family of Karsgate Keep must save her people from the dangers approaching the fortress and the troubles within. Has stunning artwork.



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AN IMAGINE
MONTHLY



THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO BIG FINISH DOCTOR WHO

WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE COMPANY THAT HAS BROUGHT US NEW DOCTOR WHO ADVENTURES EVERY MONTH FOR THE PAST 17 YEARS

WORDS MARTIN PARSONS

In 1999, ten years after the de facto cancellation of the television show and three years after the TV movie failed to go to series, *Doctor Who* returned. While it would be another six years before the Doctor made it back to TV, his travels continued in a series of audio adventures from Big Finish Productions. Today, these audios are going stronger than ever, providing new adventures for old Doctors and a whole host of their companions. Big Finish loves stories. This one is about them.

Big Finish was founded by Jason Haigh-Ellery in 1996. "I was talking to Sci-Fi Channel Europe about a couple of projects," Haigh-Ellery remembers, "And they said, 'What's the production company that's going to do this?' and I went, 'I haven't got one!' So I set one up, and that was Big Finish Productions. Subsequently we got binned and it didn't happen. I started this company, and it sat there for two years doing nothing." At this

point *Doctor Who* writer (and former editor of *Doctor Who Magazine*) Gary Russell approached Jason about doing *Doctor Who* audio plays, and Jason suggested Big Finish as the production company.

Big Finish contacted the BBC about getting the licence for *Doctor Who*, but they were unsuccessful. "The problem was that we hadn't actually done anything up to that point audio-wise," says Haigh-Ellery. "Also, the option from Fox [for a potential series following the 1996 TV movie] hadn't run out yet, so I don't think they could probably grant it anyway'. Instead, they went and got the rights to adapt a number of the Virgin New Adventures books, featuring prose *Doctor Who* companion Professor Bernice Summerfield. Cast as Bernice was Lisa Bowerman, an actress who had, appropriately enough, appeared in the final televised *Doctor Who* story, 'Survival'.

"I was asked to audition for it, famously in [future Big Finish executive producer] Nick Briggs' front room,"

remembers Bowerman, "In front of Jason, Nick and Gary, with a microphone strapped to an uplighter. I walked in and thought, 'Oh blimey, what's this? Bunch of fanboys with a Casio recorder!' We've got to take our hats off to [sound designer] Alistair Lock. When you think he was sitting in the corner with a DAT machine...I hadn't worked in post-production before, and thought it was going to sound rubbish. It wasn't until I heard it that I said, 'Bloody hell, that's fantastic!' If that quality hadn't been at the level it was, I don't think we would have got the *Doctor Who* licence."

The Bernice plays were well received all round. "We went back to the BBC and showed them these productions. They were very, very good, even though

MEANWHILE, AT BIG FINISH...

Alongside *Doctor Who*, Big Finish has produced new audio adventures (both full-cast plays and dramatic readings) for an impressive number of other genre shows, including *Blake's 7*, *The Avengers*, *Stargate*, *Highlander*, *Sapphire And Steel*, *Terrahawks*, *Dark Shadows*, *The Omega Factor*, *Survivors* and *The Prisoner*. Sadly, some of these are no longer available due to rights issues.



Big Finish started out producing audio adventures for Bernice Summerfield, starring Lisa Bowerman – a range that continues to this day.



"THIS IS DOCTOR-
BLOODY-WHO,
AND I'M DOING IT!"

NICHOLAS BRIGGS



10 TO TRY

With well over 200 stories, it is far too painful to try and



1. THE SIRENS OF TIME (1999)

Unjustly overlooked in some quarters, this reintroduces the Doctors in style – it's really like they've never been away – and the Sirens themselves are great villains.



2. THE HOLY TERROR (2000)

Tremendously dark and funny, and starring everybody's favourite comic-book penguin-looking fella Frobisher, this is Big Finish at its canon-bothering best.



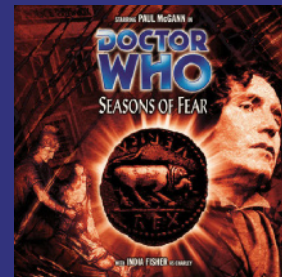
3. PROJECT: TWILIGHT (2001)

Introducing one of the greatest Big Finish original villains in Nimrod, this modern-day vampire tale is bloody, brutal and emotionally affecting.



4. THE ONE DOCTOR (2001)

A full-on comedy outing, this is as silly and festive as a tinsel-wrapped box of whoopee cushions, with Ikea robots, a toilet TARDIS and panto dame Christopher Biggins.



5. SEASONS OF FEAR (2002)

This story boasts an imposing villain and the return of a classic monster or two, but it is Paul McGann and India Fisher's sparkling chemistry that make this a must-listen.



➤ I say so myself! We had great people doing them... nothing to do with me, I can tell you!" says Haigh-Ellery. The BBC was certainly impressed, and Big Finish won the licence to produce *Doctor Who* audios.

"Gary came straight round to see me, and said, 'We've got it!'" remembers Briggs. "It was just the most exciting thing. He asked me how I would start the range, and I said, 'Well obviously a big fuck-off battle with the Daleks!' He said they hadn't got the rights, so I said, 'It's got to be a multi-Doctor story, because that's a special thing.'" The first story, released in July 1999, was indeed a multi-Doctor affair: *The Sirens Of Time*. Doctors Five, Six and Seven (Peter Davison, Colin Baker and Sylvester McCoy) each headlined an episode before coming together in the finale.

Getting the three Doctors to work with the company was easy. "They were very pleased to do it," says Haigh-Ellery. "I suspect they thought they would come in, do a little bit and then leave. Maybe do one or two of them and that would be it. To be fair, that's what we thought as well." Well, maybe not everyone. "I don't know what Jason and Gary think," says Briggs, "But when it comes to things that I love, I'm sort of blindly optimistic. It never occurred to me that it might just last a year or something. Jason's a very prudent, cautious man. I was thinking, 'Here we go! This is *Doctor-bloody-Who*, and I'm doing it!' I was in seventh heaven really."

The early plays followed a 'Doctor plus single companion' format, in some cases giving new depth to pairings relatively unexplored on TV. Big Finish also began creating original ongoing characters, with the arrival of new companion Dr Evelyn Smythe in *The Marian Conspiracy* by Jacqueline Rayner. "Gary came up with Evelyn, and gave me a shopping list of character traits, which I faithfully inserted into *Marian Conspiracy*," remembers Rayner, "Some more successfully than others." Playing the chocolate cake-loving historian was Maggie Stables, who sadly passed away in 2014. "I'd already worked with Maggie, so I could draw on that too," says Rayner. "She was just perfect. It's no wonder that so many people fell in love with Evelyn."

pick a top ten, so here is a bunch to get you started!



6. THE CHURCH AND THE CROWN (2002)

Full of the sort of comedy that was lacking in Eighties *Doctor Who*, this Musketeers romp, all doubles and duelling, is a riot from start to finish.



7. NIGHT THOUGHTS (2006)

It doesn't matter that the plot doesn't really make sense – this one is all about the superbly gothic atmosphere. "Will you walk into my parlour, said the spider to the fly..."



8. THE EMERALD TIGER (2012)

With a strong sense of fun, this rip-roaring adventure shows the Fifth Doctor at his best, gives the companions a share of the action and has a great supporting cast.



9. THE AUNTIE MATTER (2013)

Reuniting the Doctor and Romana I for the first time in over 30 years, this PG Wodehouse spoof is as delightful as a cup of tea with a whimsical maiden aunt.



10. DAMAGED GOODS (2015)

The story is exemplary, but it's worth listening to because it represents an interesting intersection: an adap of Russell T Davies' Virgin New Adventure in Big Finish style.

An early coup was securing the services of Paul McGann, who returned in 2001's *Storm Warning*. Says Haigh-Ellery, "When we were doing the first few stories, we didn't have the rights to the Daleks yet. After sorting the Daleks, my next step was to sort Paul McGann. Paul was quite open to it. He was always quite fond of *Doctor Who*, and he has really come to the point now where he loves being the Doctor. But that first time when we were in the studio with Paul, we didn't know if he would enjoy it. At the end I was tasked with going in and saying, 'So, do you want to do some more?' and he said, 'Yeah!' Thank God! It's been a fantastic journey with Paul because we've been able to create so much of his character."

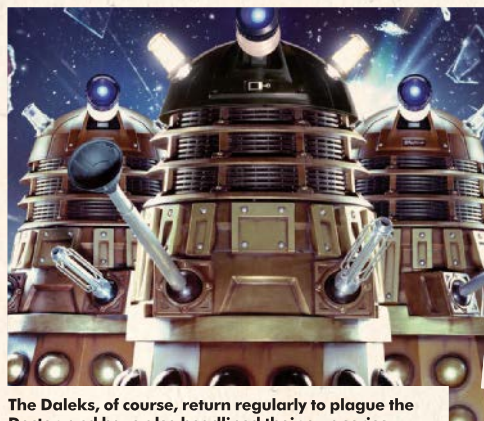
While taking pains to remain recognisable as classic *Who*, Big Finish has always been open to new and experimental pieces. *The Holy Terror* by Rob Shearman was an outing for comic strip companion Frobisher, a shapeshifter normally found in the form of a penguin. *Flip Flop* by Jonathan Morris is a four-part story over two disks that makes sense no matter which disk you play first! *Doctor Who And The Pirates* by Rayner is the closest we've come so far to getting a *Doctor Who* musical. "The musical stuff wasn't in there originally," says Rayner. "The idea just occurred to me as I was writing, and I phoned Gary Russell and said, 'Can Colin sing?' That Gary allowed me to run with it is a mark of his bravery! I'm eternally grateful – and also grateful for how sympathetic director Barnaby Edwards was to what I shall pretentiously call 'my vision.'"

"Obviously, now there is a TV show, which is a big deal, and whole departments are dedicated to protecting the *Doctor Who* brand," says Jonathan Morris. "There are some things we could do back then which we couldn't do now, but Big Finish is still very encouraging of experimentation."

While many of the writers at Big Finish are primarily associated with *Doctor Who*, they also attract a number of 'outsiders', such as Emmy award-winning writer David Quantick, who wrote *The Dark Husband* for the Seventh Doctor: "I was familiar with [Big Finish] and what they were doing. I'd heard some and liked them a



Big Finish attracts an impressive calibre of actor, many of who return time and again to work with the company.



The Daleks, of course, return regularly to plague the Doctor, and have also headlined their own series.



COMPLETE GUIDE TO BIG FINISH DOCTOR WHO



Big Finish represented a chance to revisit old Doctor Who, albeit with new cast members.



Former Doctors like Sylvester McCoy and Colin Baker readily reprised their roles.

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

The 40th anniversary was celebrated with a spectacularly idiosyncratic adventure, the epic *Zagreus*. Chock-full of Lewis Carroll references and coming after one heck of a cliffhanger in *Neverland*, this Gary Russell and Alan Barnes-scripted serial is possibly the most Marmite story Big Finish has ever produced. But how was it to act in? "It was chaos," remembers Lisa Bowerman. "Chaos! It was like the biggest Doctor Who party you've ever seen! None of us were playing our own parts. I looked at the spec for my role and went, 'Okay, let me get this right - I'm playing a mechanical gazelle sergeant major? Without irony?' I did this very camp sergeant major voice, and they went, 'Yeah, that'll do!' I've been getting flak for that ever since, I have to say!"



BIG FINISH DOCTOR WHO

COMPLETE GUIDE



50th anniversary drama *The Light At The End* finally managed to entice Tom Baker on board.

"THAT STUDIO WAS THEN BOUGHT BY THE BAND AQUA... THEY BOUGHT THE STUDIO, SO THE DALEKS WERE KICKED OUT..."

JASON HAIGH-ELLERY

➤ lot. I asked for the Seventh Doctor because I think more than anyone else he was a great character who'd had some excellent scripts with Ace, but had been let down by budgets and production values."

Big Finish has also recruited lesser-known or first-time writers. Matt Fitton was discovered when he submitted a short story to an open submissions call for one-episode story ideas. "I didn't get through, but a few of the promising entrants were called back," he remembers. "I redeveloped it, and that became the story that was used in [anthology collection] *Recorded Time*. At the recording of that [producer] David Richardson talked to me about doing [spin-off] *Counter-Measures*, and ever since then I've not stopped working for them!"

As time has gone on, the Big Finish setup has evolved. From that first read-through in Briggs' front room, they have moved through various studios (including "a dank cellar somewhere in Elephant and Castle, a studio run by hippies with lots of flea-ridden cats around," according to Bowerman). They started with open mics, but a studio or two later they began to experiment with isolated booths for individual artists, to facilitate post-production work. "That studio was then bought by the band Aqua [they of 'Barbie Girl' fame] to record an album," remembers Haigh-Ellery, "Aqua bought the studio, so the Daleks were kicked out..."

there's a quote for you!" Their next move brought them to studios owned by Toby Hrycek-Robinson, whom they have remained with ever since.

So what is working for Big Finish really like? According to Morris, "The best thing about working for Big Finish is this: it gives the writer a chance to show what they can do. Once a script has been approved, there is very little interference down the line. The end result is entirely dependent upon the script; you can't distract attention from a weak script with dazzling special effects or a rousing incidental score. You're forced to write a good script, because if you don't, everybody will notice."

"People talk about the family spirit of Big Finish all the time," says Bowerman. "It's easy to sort of camp that up a bit, but it is actually true! It's an incredibly small company. When you think about how few people are running that size business it's really quite remarkable."

"I think it's a really nurturing and positive environment," says Matt Fitton, "They've offered me every opportunity to grow and develop."

Something familiar to anyone who has ever listened to bonus material are the lunches, provided by Hrycek-Robinson. "I didn't get into writing *Doctor Who* for the catering," admits Morris, "But if I had then it would have worked out extremely well."

THE AV CLUB

Many people associated with Big Finish worked in the Eighties and Nineties on a series of unlicensed *Doctor Who* plays called the Audio Visuals. Nick Briggs starred as the Doctor, Gary Russell eventually served as executive producer (with both wearing multiple hats at the same time), and Jason Haigh-Ellery even appeared in one of them. These plays developed into a really quite brilliant set of stories, going far beyond the TV show in terms of arc-plotting and character development (and they killed off the Time Lords long before it was cool!). The AVs have had a strong influence on the Big Finish range, with several stories being either direct remakes (*Sword Of Orion*, *The Mutant Phase*) or using elements from the AV universe (*The Sands Of Life*). "When we finally got real and decided we couldn't spend our lives doing *Doctor Who* audio for no money, Gary and I had a conversation where we both agreed what a fantastic idea it would be to one day do this 'properly' with the proper Doctors and get a licence from the BBC" remembers Briggs. The rest, as they say, is history!



"Actors have been known to just be passing the studio and pop in for lunch when they have nothing to do with the production at all!" laughs Bowerman. "They're so cheeky, actors; they really are."

"Toby's background is extraordinary," she continues, "He's a record producer, he's been involved in setting up charities, he composes, he's a sound engineer, he's a cook... and he's very quiet. He won't take compliments. This isn't just a man who owns a studio; this is a man who has done everything. Never take Toby for granted, ever."

After years of working with four Doctors, Tom Baker finally came on board in 2012. "We did ask him every couple of years, and he said, 'No, not for me,' and it was a shame. Then suddenly he said he would do it," says Haigh-Ellery. "Now, he's publicly said he wishes he'd done it years ago. He's back playing that iconic character. What's not to love about being *Doctor Who*?"

"I had that as a secret aim when I became executive producer," says Briggs. "I thought, 'I'm going to get Tom Baker on board!' but I didn't know how to start. A couple of people approached us and said that Tom might be interested, and eventually David Richardson and I just had to take the bull by the horns. Tom actually said, 'Why don't you come and see me and talk to me about it?'"

Big Finish celebrated the 50th anniversary with an adventure for the first eight Doctors, *The Light At The End*. Around the same time, a wave of changes ➤

WHILE THE DOCTOR'S AWAY...

Big Finish has produced a large number of spinoffs for Doctor Who characters and concepts, including the Daleks, Cyberman, Jago & Litefoot, Gallifrey, Counter-Measures (featuring the team from *Remembrance Of The Daleks*), Sarah Jane Smith, UNIT (in various incarnations), *The Diary Of River Song*, *The Churchill Years* and *I, Davros*, as well as spin-offs featuring original Big Finish Doctor Who characters like Vienna, Graceless and Charley Pollard.



"STEVEN MOFFAT HAS SAID HE SEES THE LIVES OF A LOT OF THE CHARACTERS CONTINUING ON AUDIO WITH BIG FINISH"

DAVID RICHARDSON

BIG FINISH DOCTOR WHO

COMPLETE GUIDE



New *Who* characters like Ian McNeice's Winston Churchill have been given their own spin-off adventures.

➤ began. "I noticed Big Finish being embraced a lot in the whole 50th celebration," remembers Richardson. "We became quite a part of the event at the ExCel [the huge 50th anniversary convention], there was *The Night Of The Doctor* [Paul McGann's swansong mini-episode which featured a roll call of Big Finish companions], Steven Moffat was saying in interviews that he saw the lives of a lot of the characters continuing on audio with Big Finish, which was lovely and generous of him. That support continued after the 50th as well."

In early 2015, it was announced that Big Finish had gained the rights to the new series UNIT team of Kate Lethbridge-Stewart and Osgood. "We knew pretty early on that we would be allowed to do the new series eventually," admits Haigh-Ellery. "We just knew it wouldn't be for a while. That while was a bit longer than we anticipated, I think." Hot on the heels of the UNIT announcement came a flood of exciting announcements – new adventures featuring Torchwood, friendly Sontaran Strax, Ian McNeice's Winston Churchill and a gaggle of monsters from the post-2005 series.

And it didn't stop there. Sir John Hurt has reprised his War Doctor role for a series of adventures set in the hitherto unmentionable Time War, and River Song has returned, cleverly avoiding continuity-bothering encounters with old Doctors. Finally, the Tenth Doctor came back, bringing Donna Noble with him. Big Finish has now caught up with the television series whose spirit it kept alive for six years. Well, almost. "We deal with what are called 'new legacy Doctors'," explains Haigh-Ellery, referring to Doctors post-2005 but before the current incarnation.

Their contract has now been renewed until 2025. "We were always working slightly under the sword of Damocles in that it took a year to negotiate the contract and in a year we had to negotiate again, so a lot of what we did couldn't be that overarching," explains Haigh-Ellery. "This gives us the ability to extend what we're doing and plan things years in advance. To some extent we haven't used the advantage of this yet, but we're beginning to think

about it. It's going to be interesting – long-term planning is a wonderful thing."

By the time the contract is next up for renewal, the Doctor's adventures with Big Finish will have gone on for as long as the original run of the TV show.

"Really, is that true?!" marvels Briggs. "Good lord! It's frightening to think how old I'll be in nine years' time! I've no intention of stopping. I presume that in about seven years' time we might start saying to the BBC, 'Can we talk about extending this?' We're not thinking it will all be over and done with in nine years' time."

Might we be in for any major surprises in the near future? "We're not asking Christopher Eccleston every day," admits Briggs, "Even though I've suggested asking him every sixth months! The answer is currently no." Which is a crying shame if you ask us!

So just what is it that has made Big Finish *Doctor Who* so successful? "For the guys that run Big Finish, this is their passion, and I think that passion has been translated into the quality of work that they produce," says Bowerman. "They don't follow in the wake of the TV show," says Quantick, "They make proper episodes of *Doctor Who* that just happen to be audio episodes. The Big Finish universe is just a bigger version of the television universe. And they're brilliant – brilliant casts, brilliant scripts and brilliant stories."

Here's to the next 17 years! ☺

For more information, visit www.bigfinish.co.uk.



Torchwood power couple Jack and Ianto's complicated relationship is explored in *Broken*.



THE OTHER DOCTORS

A series of plays called *Doctor Who Unbound* dealt with 'What if...?' scenarios and allowed Big Finish to play with stunt casting – the range let Geoffrey Bayldon, David Warner, David Collings, Michael Jayston and Arabella Weir have a go at being the Doctor, with scenarios ranging from 'What if the Doctor never left Gallifrey?' to the rather more abstract (and really quite shocking) 'What if the Doctor believed that the ends justified the means?'.



INTERVIEW

CLANCY BROWN

THE KURGAN HIMSELF ON *HIGHLANDER*, TATTOOS AND CREATING THE VOICES OF LEX LUTHOR AND MR KRABS...

WORDS MATTHEW TURNER

Best known as The Kurgan in *Highlander*, Clancy Brown has remained prolific both in the genre throughout his career and in the voiceover animation field. With his most famous film receiving the 4K restoration treatment, we sat down with him to discuss tattoos, sword fights and Mr Krabs.

What are your lasting memories of *Highlander*?

Without a doubt, the lasting memory of *Highlander* for me was the friendship that I developed with Bob Anderson, who was also the sword master for *Star Wars*, *Zorro* and a number of other shows. He was just a great gentleman, one of the people in films that you meet who is an expert in his particular discipline – undeniably the best in the world at what he did – and a great friend, just a great, normal human being, and I miss him terribly. He died two years ago, and we're a lesser planet for losing him.

What about the sword-fight scenes in the film? Were they difficult to learn?

Bob and I worked out a lot of great sword fights in our free time, and we'd come in and show Chris [Lambert, who played protagonist Connor MacLeod] and Sean [Connery, aka Juan Sanchez Villa-Lobos Ramirez]. They'd take all the best bits for themselves, and we'd



Brown is one of few to feature in Marvel and DC properties.

just try to make it all work. So I think that they were good sword fights, although I was watching them and thinking, "Man, they'd be so much better in a remake", because they're kind of slow or they're kind of cumbersome because the swords are so big, but now they'd be so fast and digital, and awesome if we could do it again.

You only had Sean Connery for seven days of production. What was it like shooting in such a short space of time?

Well, we had Jerry Fisher as the director of photography. Jerry is a no-nonsense, old-school guy, and the great thing about the way Jerry and Russell [Mulcahy, director] worked is that Russell was able to tell him what he wanted to do, and then Jerry just did it – they didn't argue about it. Russell just had an eye that nobody else had. He was a very easy director to deal with because he was very enthusiastic about his own movie, and about everybody else's work as well. And then you had guys like Jim Acheson doing the wardrobe and Lois Burwell doing the make-up, so you had an A-list team that nobody knew was A-list yet.

Did you have any creative input into The Kurgan's awesome outfit?

Yeah, Jim Acheson was really generous. He did consult a little bit with me, but what does a 25-year old really know about design or anything? The only thing that I did actually suggest was that the original headpiece had this great mane attached to it, like a big black mane, and so when we went to do the final look with the shaved head and the tattoo I said, "Wouldn't it be great if that tattoo called back to the headpiece and the mane?" So

the guy who designed the tattoo basically recreated that character on the side of my head, and then we kept the black hair as part of it, which kind of became a meme for a while. There were no memes back then, but in the tattoo world that was kind of a thing where hair got incorporated in people's tattoos for a little while, and dragons and stuff like that, so I'm very proud of my pop-culture influence for half a year in the Eighties.

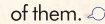
What do different generations recognise you most from?

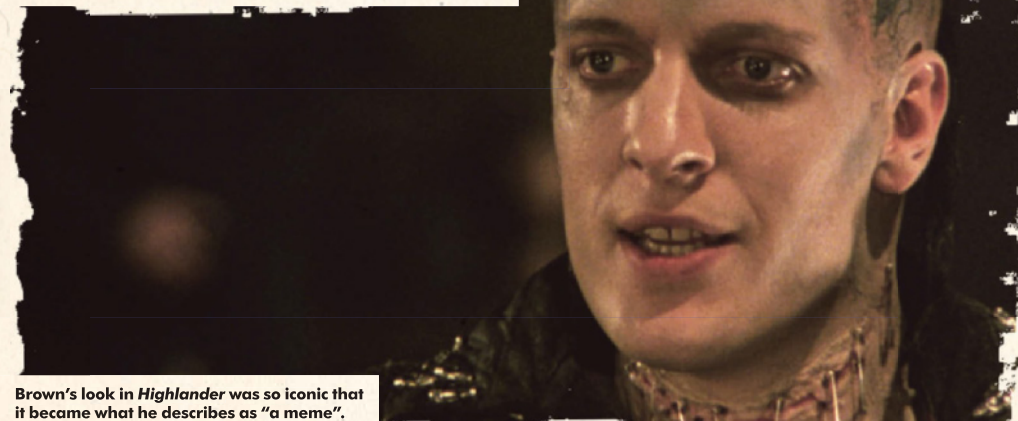
It's different ones – some people recognise me from *Pet Sematary Two*, some people recognise me from *Highlander*, and now I get a lot of *Daredevil*. The most ubiquitous is probably just the voice of Mr Krabs on *SpongeBob*, but because I don't talk like that I don't get stopped on the street for it.

When you're voice acting, how do you go about creating the voice and personality for someone like Lex Luthor?

With that one, I got lucky that they just decided to open it up and have other actors in it. So they got Tim Daly to play Superman, my buddy Dana Delaney to play Lois Lane, Kevin Conroy to play Batman and Mark Hamill to do the Joker – I mean, these aren't the usual characters, and so I sort of fell into that accidentally. Creating Mr Krabs was just kind of a fluky thing – it was this guy who loves money and he's a crab, so I did some kind of a piratey thing. Some of the casting directors, they'll direct you and they'll push you in a certain direction, but they know how your voice sounds more than you do – if you ever listen to your own voice, you sit there and you go, "Oh my god, I hate that voice!" and so you have to trust them, because the directors that cast that, they're better at understanding how your voice is heard than you are.

You're one of the few actors to be in both Marvel and DC TV projects, appearing in *The Flash* and *Daredevil*. Do they mind that you're on both sides, as it were?

I have no idea – I do a lot of Marvel voiceover characters too, so I don't know – I'm sure they have policies, but you had Ryan Reynolds do *Green Lantern* and then *Deadpool* – these guys cross over all the time. I'm not a big fan of those live-action cartoons. I like the animation versions of them, but the live-action versions, I think those are problematic and dated. I mean, it doesn't matter how sophisticated they get, they're just always never going to be what it is. I like the 2D versions of them. 



Brown's look in *Highlander* was so iconic that it became what he describes as "a meme".



Highlander is available to buy on Blu-ray now, distributed by Studiocanal.

CLANCY BROWN

INTERVIEW



"HIGHLANDER
HAD AN A-LIST
TEAM THAT
NOBODY KNEW
WAS A-LIST YET"

CLANCY BROWN

IT'S THE GREATEST ANIME FILM EVER MADE, AND A DEFINING WORK OF SCIENCE FICTION. NO WONDER HOLLYWOOD CAN'T FIGURE IT OUT. JOIN US AS WE HOP ON OUR MOTORBIKES AND RACE THROUGH THE STREETS OF NEO-TOKYO. TETSUO!!!

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL



Film

RUNNING TIME:

124 minutes

RELEASE DATE:

16 July 1988

DIRECTOR:

Katsuhiro Otomo

WRITERS: Katsuhiro Otomo,

Izo Hashimoto

CAST: Mitsuo Iwata,

Nozomu Sasaki, Mami

Koyama, Taro Ishida, Tesshō

Genda, Hiroshi Ōtake

About

In 1988, an explosive psychic event in Tokyo started WW3. Now in 2019, a year away from hosting the Olympics, the city is an overcrowded, under-policed sprawl. Kaneda is leading his biker gang when its youngest member, Tetsuo, is hurt while avoiding a mysterious young boy, who is promptly spirited away by a government helicopter. This encounter awakens something in Tetsuo, a dangerous psychic power that could mean the end of us all. Kaneda must team up with a group of terrorists to track down his missing friend, while Shikishima uses his child psychics to try to bring this new threat under control. It's all leading towards a terrifying confrontation and the awakening of the long-dead Akira. Neo-Tokyo is about to E-X-P-L-O-D-E.

AKIRA

It's not often that you can point to a film and say it not only defines a genre, but an art form and the possibilities it represents. But for many of us, our first encounter with anime was Katsuhiro Otomo's magnificent Akira. Whether you experienced it at home, or were lucky enough to see it on the big screen, Akira was, and continues to be, the gateway film for movie fans that haven't yet had their eyes opened.

But what makes it so special? It's not tied to a renowned production company like Studio Ghibli, and it hasn't gone on to spawn legions of sequels or TV series in the same fashion as other landmark anime films like *Ghost In The Shell*. Why do we still respond to friends stating that they've never seen an anime film by thrusting a copy of *Akira* into their hands?

The short answer is because it's stunning. Given that the word 'visionary' is currently attached to any director who has made a film, we can restore some of its weight by attaching it to Katsuhiro Otomo. His vision of a post-World War III Neo-Tokyo is eye-popping, from the grimy back streets to the glittering skyscrapers, and the exploding highways to the frozen underground bunkers. That unforgettable opening sequence, as Kaneda's Capsule biker gang races after the Clowns and a student protest is interrupted by the bloody pursuit of the escaped Takashi and his doomed rescuer pins you to the edge of your seat. Small wonder, given the lengths to which Otomo went to ensure a visual spectacle to rival his own Manga.

Otomo condensed his sprawling six-volume comic book into just over two hours of film. It's an amazing feat of adaptation, as the filmmaker sheds huge swathes of plot from his source material, abbreviating the plotlines of his key characters while retaining their impact. The result is streamlined but still hugely ambitious, as

Otomo's insistence on the very best in animation required a huge budget and an unbelievable effort on behalf of the creative team.

The production was so huge that it required the formation of The Akira Committee, a group composed of seven different companies and corporations, to pool the record-breaking budget of approximately \$10 million (¥1,100,000,000). Another record would soon be broken, as 327 different colours were used for the film. With so much of *Akira* taking place at night, Otomo was determined that there be a wide range of shades of darkness, from the neon-lit metropolis centre to the murkiness of the alleyways, and 70 animators worked to bring his vision to life.

Unlike other animated films made in Japan at the time, Otomo decided to follow Disney's example and record the voice actors before the animation process began so that the characters' movements actually matched the dialogue. The attention to detail never ceases to amaze. Every successive watch of *Akira* offers up fresh surprises; there's always something new that catches the eye. Even a scene like Colonel Shikishima and Doctor Onishi's elevator ride is stunning, with the bustling skyscrapers jostling for attention through the glass.

Obviously, it's not just the renderings of the city and people that impress. We have already talked about the unforgettable chase sequence that opens the film, with its incredibly cinematic action, brutal violence and moments that are just plain awesome (yes, we're talking about the clown chief just leaning back on his bike with his arms folded).

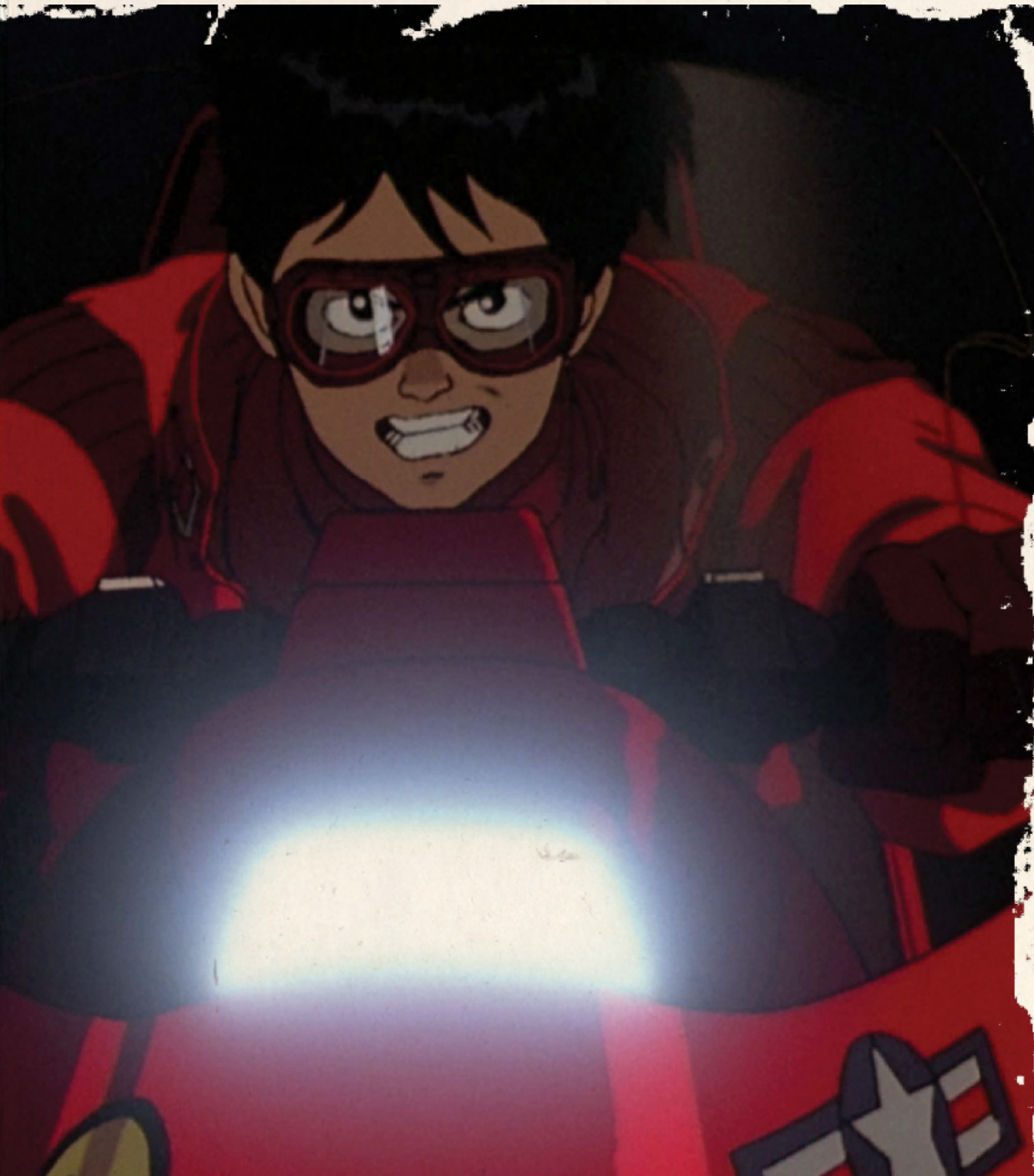
The visuals also offer bizarre and fantastical delights. Take the wonderful sequence in which the Espers, the three veteran psychic 'children', attempt to intimidate the hospitalised Tetsuo, using

"OTOMO'S VISION OF POST-WAR NEO-TOKYO IS EYE-POPPING"

The opening motorbike chase through Neo-Tokyo still stuns.



Terrible psychic powers rest in the hands of fragile young humans.



CLASSIC QUOTES

"THE FUTURE IS NOT A STRAIGHT LINE. IT IS FILLED WITH MANY CROSSROADS. THERE MUST BE A FUTURE THAT WE CAN CHOOSE FOR OURSELVES"

KIYOKO

"HEH, HEH... WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME? I MUST BE DREAMING. I FEEL LIKE I CAN TAKE OUT THE WORLD"

TETSUO

"AMOEBAS DON'T MAKE MOTORCYCLES AND ATOMIC BOMBS!"

KEI

"NOW YOU'RE KING OF THE MOUNTAIN, BUT IT'S ALL GARBAGE!"

KANEDA

"WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO TRY AND SAVE ME? I COULD HANDLE IT ON MY OWN. YEAH, I ADMIT I'VE GOTTEN BEATEN BEFORE, BUT I WON'T ALWAYS BE ON THE RECEIVING END, YOU HEAR THAT? YOU UNDERSTAND?"

TETSUO

"WHAT DID YOU PEOPLE DO TO MY HEAD?"

TETSUO

"HE'S NOT YOUR FRIEND, HE'S OURS! IF SOMEBODY'S GONNA KILL HIM, IT SHOULD BE US!"

KANEDA

"TWIN CERAMIC ROTOR DRIVES ON EACH WHEEL! AND THESE LOOK LIKE COMPUTER CONTROLLED ANTI-LOCK BRAKES! WOW, 200 HORSES AT 12,000 RPM!"

TETSUO



Otomo's rendering of Neo-Tokyo was groundbreaking.

AKIRA LIVES ON

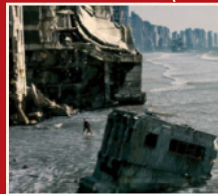
Five Hollywood movies inspired by the anime

STRONGER (2007)



1 What may come as a surprise to some is that Kanye West is a big fan of the movie, and the video for his and Daft Punk's hit turns the star into Tetsuo.

INCEPTION (2010)



2 The images of ruined cities and bending skyscrapers in Christopher Nolan's epic are seriously reminiscent of the look of Neo-Tokyo.

LOOPER (2012)



3 It's not just Cid's TK power in Rian Johnson's time-travel movie that feels lifted from Akira; it's the whole attitude of JGL's character.

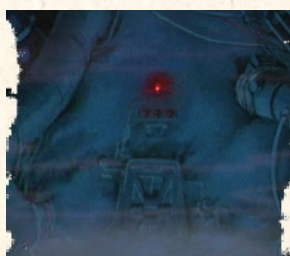
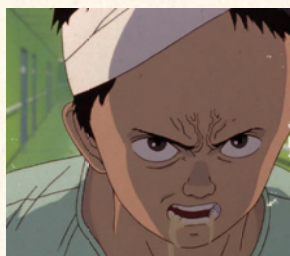
➤ the form of initially tiny, then grotesquely large, children's toys (a bear, a bunny and a car) to scare the life out of him. It's accompanied by an incredible score from Tsutomu Ohashi's Geinoh Yamashirogumi group (stunning throughout and absolutely crucial), and in a foreshadowing of the film's body-horror finale, the flesh of these creatures contorts, twists and bleeds, spewing milk over the hospital room floor.

The torture only stops when Tetsuo accidentally cuts his foot on a piece of broken glass, and the bear and rabbit recoil in terror, their childlike screams of "It's blood!" and "I'm scared" prompting the end of the illusion and the reveal of these physically vulnerable specimens.

Speaking of body horror, there's a reason why everyone remembers the Akira

finale. It's a glorious, insane and grotesque spectacle, as Tetsuo belatedly realises that he's taken on powers he can't control. Taking his throne at the empty Olympic stadium with his queen – the meek and desperately unfortunate Kaori – at his side, Tetsuo's posturing is at odds with what's going on inside him. His flesh is exploding, exploring and looking for new forms and things to absorb, from the building's stonework to the people around him.

That gruesome arm-thing that shoots out towards Shikishima is just the start, as he erupts into an all-consuming, uncontrollable abomination, crushing poor Kaori inside him as he screams for help. Only the reawakened power of Akira can halt Tetsuo's transformation, as the spirit causes another cataclysmic psychic



Only a reawakened Akira can stop Tetsuo – or destroy everything.

Kaneda faces the monster his friend has become. "TETSUO!"

CHRONICLE (2012)



4 Max Landis and Josh Trank's superpowered debut heavily borrows from *Akira*, notably in the vulnerable group member drifting into darkness.

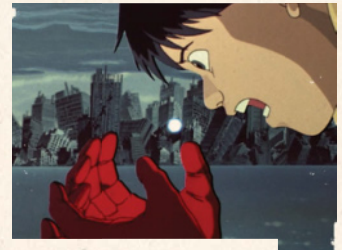
PACIFIC RIM (2013)



5 Guillermo del Toro's movie riffs on everything, but we'd argue that Idris Elba's gruff Stacker Pentecost is basically just Colonel Shikishima.



The impetuous Kaneda is no match for what's to come.



The film's finale is full of parallels with historic tragedies.



event, taking the two of them into another universe via some kind of 'cosmic rebirth'.

These visions of enormous balls of destructive light, of a Tokyo blown away by an incredible force, are obviously reminiscent of nuclear disaster. The Eighties event is revealed to have been a result of government experimentation, which led to the dissected remains of Akira being buried deep underground – a destructive force kept on ice. Shikishima is the only one who really understands its potential, surrounded by nervy soldiers, an over-eager scientist and bickering politicians who question whether or not Akira even exists. As an allegory for real-world mass destruction, it's really only matched by *Godzilla* in terms of scope and impact.

But as eye-popping and breathtaking as *Akira* is, we shouldn't overlook one of the film's most crucial elements: the central relationship between Kaneda and Tetsuo. Kaneda is as close as we get to a traditional hero, but for much of the film he's essentially a horny teen out for a good time, and only really gets interesting when he's around Tetsuo, whose sense of inferiority due to his youth, stature and standing in the group has led to his bitterness and violent temper. He's sick of being rescued, and he hates Kaneda as much as he worships him. Tetsuo's never going to be as capable, as we see in the brutal sequence in which he takes Kaori for a ride on Kaneda's bike, but is ambushed by the vengeful Clowns. He is

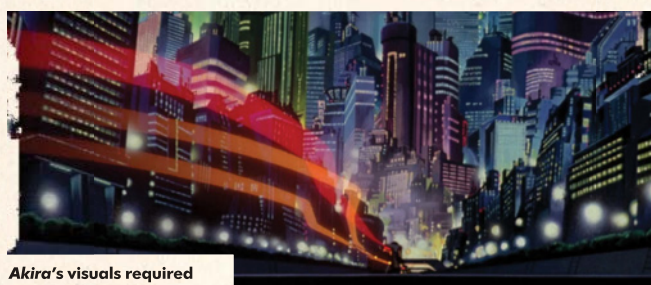
beaten and Kaori is assaulted, and it's up to Kaneda and the gang to save them before it's too late.

Once Tetsuo starts flexing his telekinetic muscles, he relishes the incredible power he has and the fear he inspires in others. He wants to push the bar, setting off to find this Akira who everyone is so afraid of and gleefully taking on the heavily armed Kaneda in a fight. However, Otomo never lets us lose sight of his humanity. Every now and then we get a glimpse of fear, which makes that final confrontation between him and Kaneda so affecting. Kaneda has come to kill his old friend, but faced with the fact that Tetsuo needs his help, our hero is unable to euthanise or abandon him, leading to him being pulled into both the bulging mass of the monstrous Tetsuo and into the ball of light that consumes him.

There, we see fragments of memories from both Akira and Tetsuo, but it's the latter's memories that provide the key to the emotional component of the film. As the new 'abandoned' arrival at school, Tetsuo is bullied and has his toy taken away from him. Kaneda promptly returns it, sporting a bloody nose and offering wisdom about the bullies, even though he admits to only having just arrived there himself. They've been together since, and only the force of Akira can separate them.

It's the powerful core of a film that would be a landmark achievement based on its visuals alone. It has inspired countless filmmakers and artists, and a live-action Hollywood remake has been in the works for as long as we can remember. One thing's for sure: they'll never better it. Neo-Tokyo is one thing, but *Akira* has been exploding our brains for 28 years, and it's never going to stop. 

Akira is out now on Blu-ray.

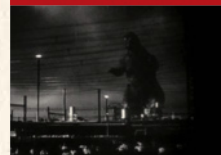


Akira's visuals required a record-breaking budget.



Tetsuo's transformation is body horror at its most gruesome.

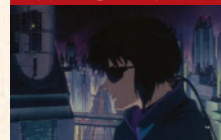
WATCH FIRST



GODZILLA (1954)

Atomic testing creates an unstoppable destructive force in one of the greatest ever monster movies.

WATCH NEXT



GHOST IN THE SHELL (1995)

This is another landmark of Japanese animation, and still absolutely stunning.

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"Blew my teenage mind back in the early Nineties. Set the highest standard for animated manga ever since. Stunning."

@ParsonsFiction



"Mind-blowing, occasionally confusing Manga marvel. The first great of its kind."

@DaveNeal33



"Ah! I'm the opposite of the other guys... Loved it when I was a kid, but it just feels a little dated now..."

@KIMJONG1LL



"A genre defining combination of cyberpunk, body horror and political allegory. A fantastic mind blowing piece of art."

@SpaceDockJury



"The film oozes cool and while the freak-out psychedelics are fun, I like that its core story is just tension between two best friends."

@AutHorsDoeu



BEHIND THE SCENES

ANIMATRONICS MASTER JOHN COX

OSCAR-WINNING PUPPETEERING AND PRACTICAL EFFECTS PIONEER JOHN COX ON HOW RAY HARRYHAUSEN AND STAR WARS INSPIRED HIM TO BECOME THE GO-TO GUY FOR REALISTIC CINEMATIC CREATURES, AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR CINEMA'S ANTIQUATED ART FORM

WORDS OLIVER PFEIFFER

The recipient of an Academy Award for his work on *Babe*, John Cox's effects work has also found a place in more genre-orientated fare. From *Pitch Black* and *Scooby Doo* to *The Host* and *Nim's Island*, he has livened up the big screen with effects that hark back to a more classical age while simultaneously standing out for their startling realism. We tracked him down to learn the secrets of his craft...

Tell us a bit about how you got interested in puppeteering and animatronics.

Both Willis O'Brien's groundbreaking stop-motion work on the original classic 1933 *King Kong* film and later the great Ray Harryhausen (*Jason And The Argonauts*, *The Golden Voyage Of Sinbad* et al) were highly influential when I was young, and set me on this pathway. I



Who needs an ET-powered bicycle when you're Peter Pan!

decided at age 14 that I wanted to make giant gorillas and dinosaurs for the movies.

When I was at high school I saw the original *Star Wars* film, and marvelled at how they used stop-motion animation for the game between R2-D2 and Chewbacca in the Millennium Falcon. Later, Lucasfilm employed the same technique for the Imperial walkers and the tauntaun creatures that Han and Luke ride at the beginning of *The Empire Strikes Back*. Stop-motion was a valid FX solution in filmmaking during the early Eighties, and that's when I convinced my parents that there were opportunities to get work doing what I wanted to do in the film industry.

You're based in Australia. Were they using these types of special effects there at the time?

No, there was zero stop-motion work. David Pride [who he worked with on *The Return Of Captain Invisible*, among other titles] took me under his wing. Together, we built the country's first motion-capture camera system. Then there was Andrew McCrae, who wrote all the computer code to allow precise repeatability of the camera moves. This is when most people didn't even know how to spell the word 'computer'!

You're credited early on in your career as working as a model maker on the Australian superhero fantasy comedy *Captain Invincible*, as well as a sculptor on the Eighties sci-fi adventure *Sky Pirates*. What were your experiences on these productions like?

Sky Pirates had an *Indiana Jones*-style hero who goes after treasure buried on Easter Island. I was primarily responsible for making specialised replica props and

mummified dead bodies. Blue screen was used, and Lucasfilm was involved in that, but it became very costly and a real juggling act.

Both *Pirates* and *Captain Invincible* employed the use of front projection, which was also a popular method of doing things at the time. It enabled you to front-project an image and shoot your models live, thus enabling you to do in-camera FX work. It did have its drawbacks, such as sometimes quite noticeable colour changes. For example, with the original *Superman* films, you can see visible colour alterations with his costumes.

A decade later you were responsible for some of the groundbreaking animatronics in *Babe*, for which you subsequently won an Oscar. I heard that there were some funny interactions between the real and robotic sheep...

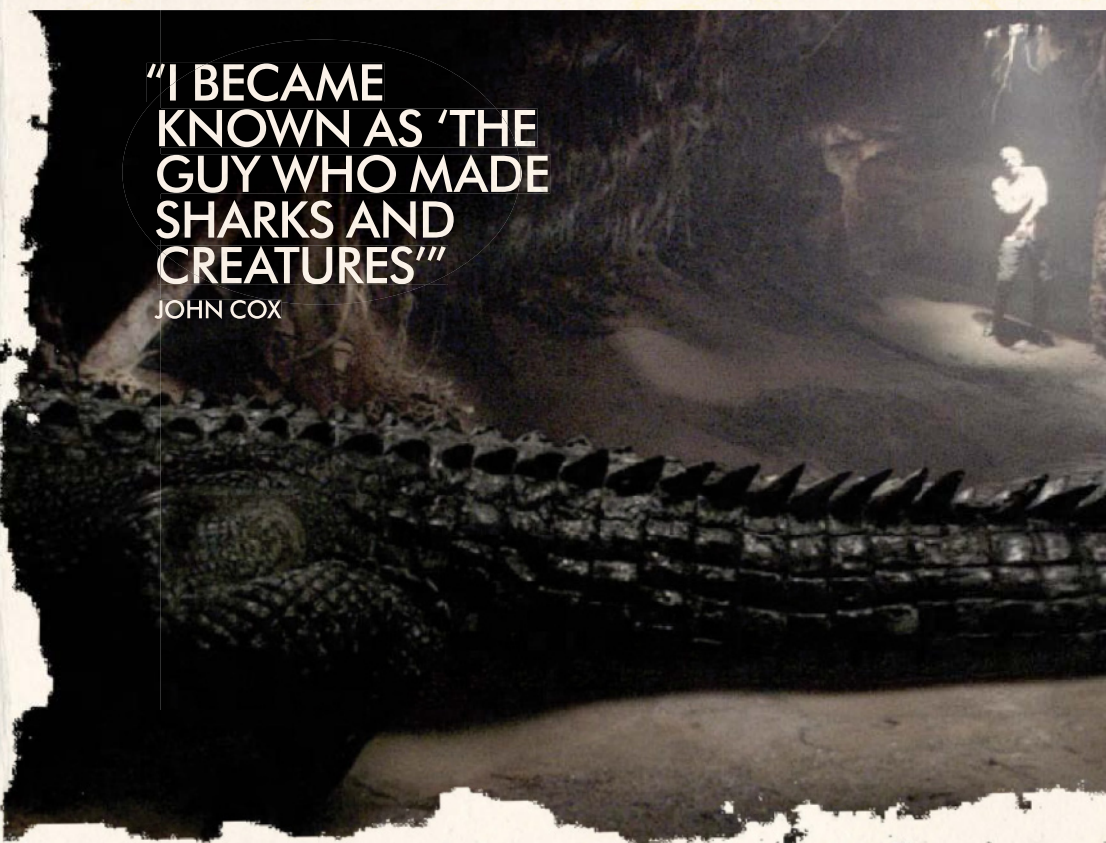
During that time I had become known as 'the guy who made sharks and creatures'. I was the go-to person for that. As well as sleeping puppies, mice and a dog, we made six animatronic white-faced Border Leicesters and three black-faced Suffolk sheep for *Babe*. They were placed with a flock of ten real sheep, and we moved them around between shots so no one could tell which were ours – even the animal trainers. They'd often be found feeding the animatronic sheep between takes. We'd stick our sheep's heads in the tin and have a chew, and then give them a fright by saying "Thank you". Because of flock mentality the real sheep would look whichever way our robotic sheep did. More than once we were asked to check that our controls were working when one of the sheep wouldn't move, but it was always a real sheep just zoning out! ➤



The mammoth animatronic croc for *Peter Pan* could swallow you whole!

"I BECAME
KNOWN AS 'THE
GUY WHO MADE
SHARKS AND
CREATURES'"

JOHN COX



Cox has taken the lead in keeping practical effects alive.



BEHIND THE SCENES

JOHN COX

"WE MADE A LUNGING CROC THAT ATE SAM WORTHINGTON! LOTS OF FUN"

JOHN COX

5 ICONIC ANIMATRONIC MOMENTS THE BEST OF THE CREATURES



1. JAWS (1975)

Although he looks decidedly rubbery today – and was notoriously unreliable during production – there's no denying the impact that

'Bruce' the shark has the moment he devours Quint (Robert Shaw) whole during the heart-stopping climax of Steven Spielberg's classic.



2. THE THING (1982)

Stan Winston and Rob Bottin collaborated on John Carpenter's classic, and it's their truly gruesome

animatronics that remains the most memorable parts of the movie. There's good reason the infamous "You've gotta be fucking kidding!" line works so well.



3. JURASSIC PARK (1993)

Arguably, it's the animatronic dinosaurs that hold up better today than the groundbreaking-for-the-

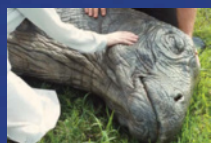
time CGI effects. As designed by an Oscar-winning Stan Winston, the T-Rex remains terrifyingly tangible.



4. BABE (1995)

It's increasingly difficult to separate the real from the realistic in this Academy Award-winning talking-pig classic, which is a testament

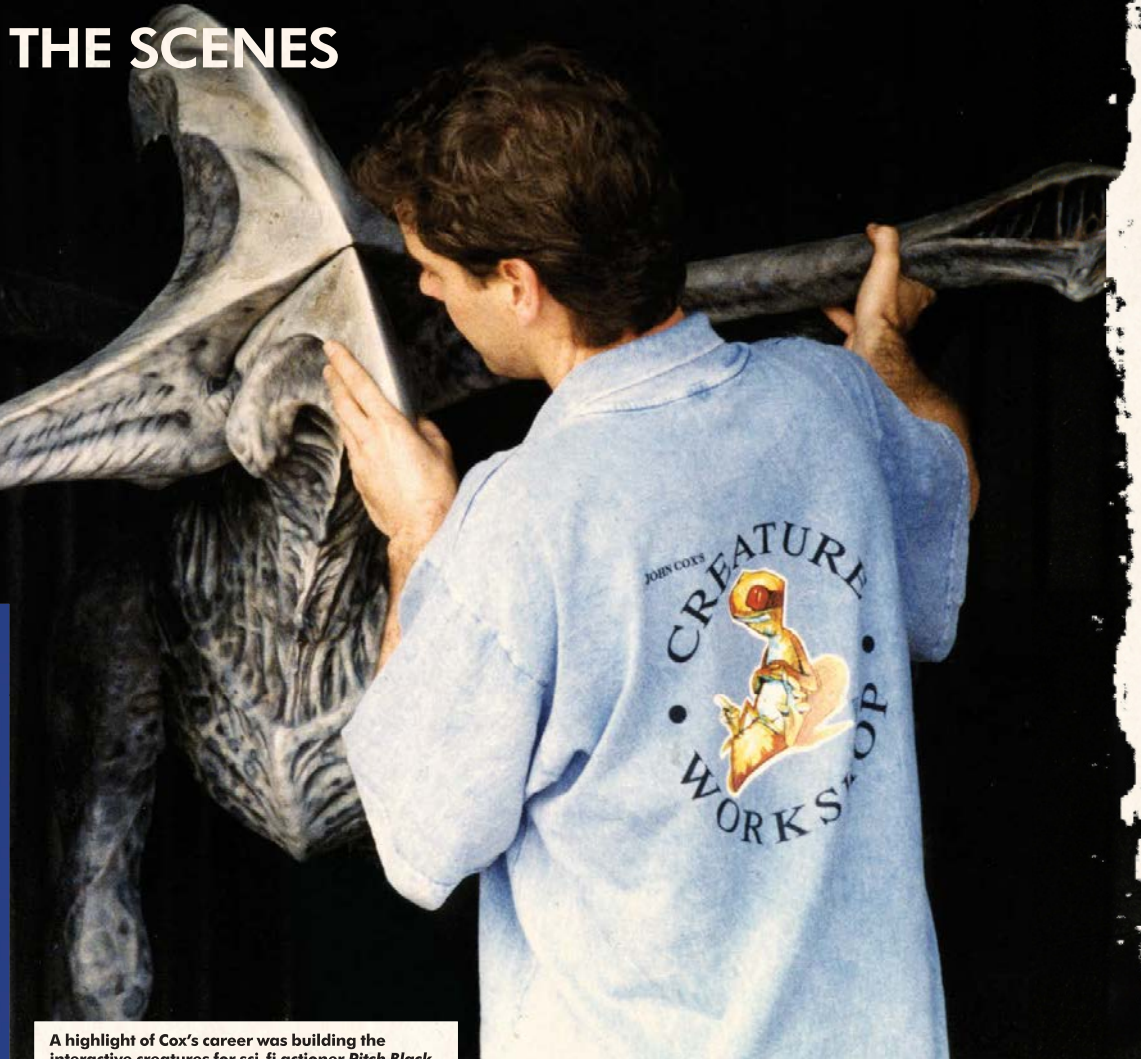
to the power of John Cox and his fellow creative team's extraordinary animatronics.



5. JURASSIC WORLD (2015)

Due to the advancements of CGI FX, some filmmakers sadly feel there's little need for animatronics. However,

Colin Trevorrow paid homage to the antiquated art form by including a dying animatronic Apatosaurus in what is arguably the film's most affecting scene.



A highlight of Cox's career was building the interactive creatures for sci-fi actioner *Pitch Black*.

➤ **It's refreshing to learn that animatronics and puppeteering were also employed in such an FX-laden flick as *Pitch Black*...**

20 per cent of the creatures you see in the movie are puppets, and we ended up building 11 of them. There was a real complexity to what we were being asked to do. There were a couple of close-up shots in the film where you see the creatures' neck snap or their guts cut open, and those were dummy creatures created by us. We were also involved in the work where the creatures interact with the performers in close-up – specifically the shots of the creatures' arms and claws.

How disheartening is it when your hard work doesn't make it on screen, which I believe was the case with an elaborate crocodile sequence in PJ Hogan's *Peter Pan*?

It's very disheartening. We worked for 16 weeks on this giant three-metre hydraulic crocodile for a sequence in the film, which was to demonstrate how the croc had his own life, with this cave and art collection. The entire sequence was heavily storyboarded, with plenty of interaction between the characters and the croc.

The boys were to sneak past the creature, which opens its eyes but ultimately can't see anything. They hide behind a portrait of Captain Hook, and the sequence ends with them sticking the portrait into the crocodile's jaws, which he then snaps in half as they escape.

We shot a lot of footage for ourselves in the cave set and did a mock-up of the attack sequence to show the timing of the sequence to the director. It was a

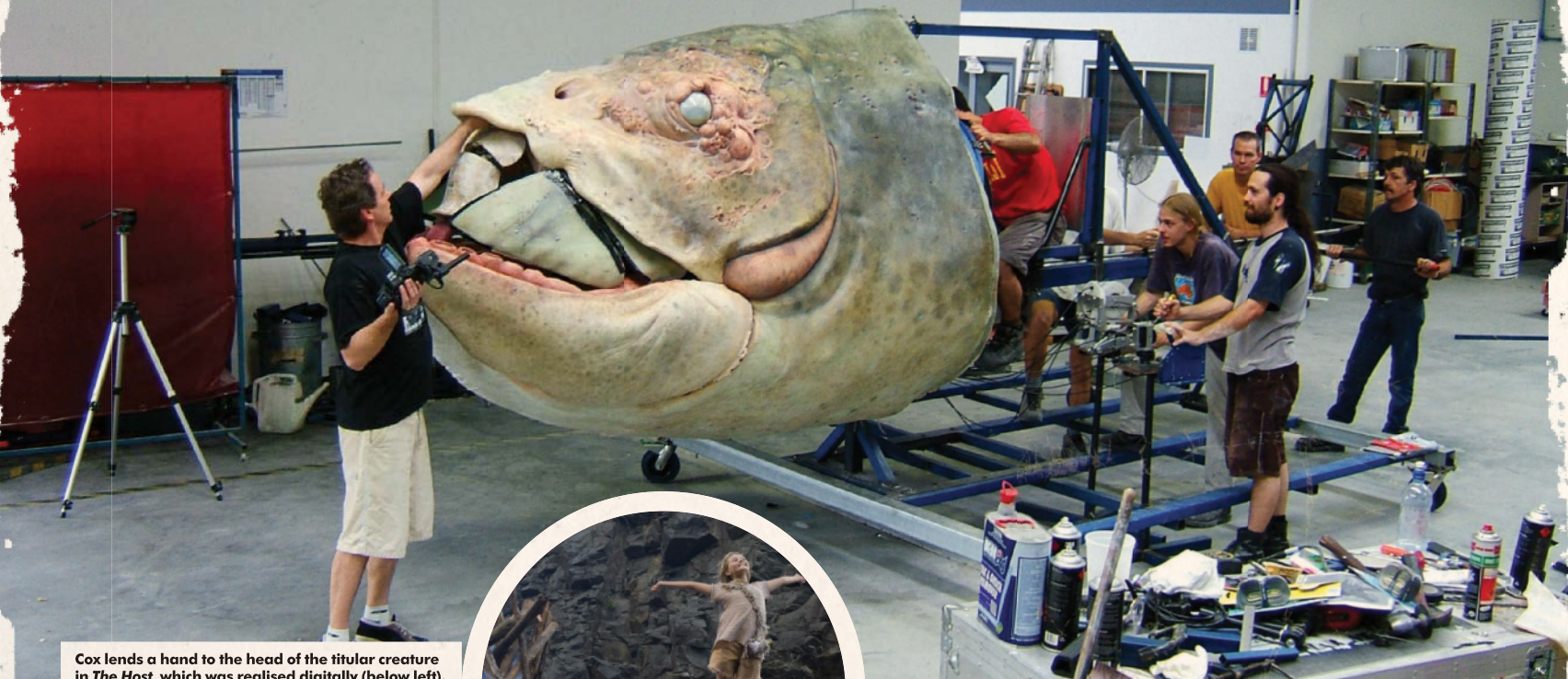
marvellous and exciting sequence, but regrettably it never saw the light of day.

You also worked on Greg McLean's underrated and extensive croc flick *Rogue*. How would you say those animatronic croc designs compared, and were you satisfied with how your work came across on screen?

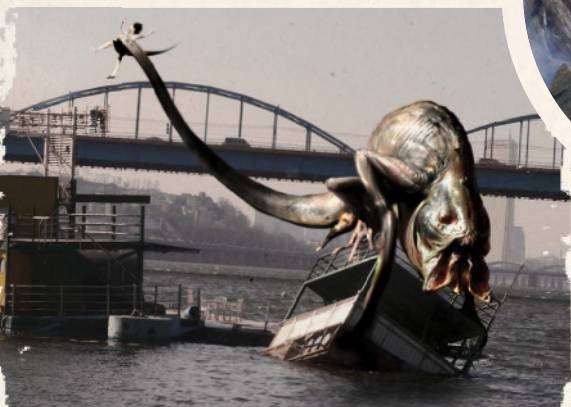
Every piece we make is a new adventure in problem solving. Each scenario requires different solutions. As well as a full-sized hydraulically powered crocodile, we made a third-scale croc and [a dummy of actress] Radha Mitchell for the death-roll scene. Even stunt guys aren't keen to do underwater death rolls. We also made a lunging croc that ate Sam Worthington! Lots of fun.



Up close and personal with a deadly nocturnal alien from *Pitch Black*.



Cox lends a hand to the head of the titular creature in *The Host*, which was realised digitally (below left).



A full-scale animatronic turtle was created by Cox and his team for the kid's adventure flick *Nim's Island*.



You also created an animatronic turtle for *Nim's Island*. In this case it was a matter of environmental necessity, wasn't it?

Turtles are protected in Australia, so the handling of them is prohibited. The turtle we developed – which crawls slowly up the beach in the film – was a very good fit. It had robotic movement where the flippers worked, and the head could move from side to side. It also had eye movement. I absolutely love doing that stuff, and this particular animal was a perfect fit for animatronics, as they don't have fur like a mammal does. The textural detailing would no doubt have been lost if it was attempted with CGI.

You also lent your skills to Bong Joon-ho's terrific monster movie, *The Host*. What can you reveal about working on this production?

We received a call from the visual effects supervisor. He was in a bit of a dilemma, as *The Host* was originally conceived to be an entirely digital production. He had essentially said to the producers, "So, who's building the practical creature heads for the close-up shots?" There was no one! What followed was a frantic phone call with a deadline of about ten weeks to complete the work, as they were already shooting the film in order for it to be ready for a scene during the final week of production in Korea. Originally, the head we built was to be set on fire in the film. However, the filmmakers liked it so much that they couldn't bring themselves to burn it! It was a very strange design with a flower-like mouth opening, and required a very complex mechanical design. There were a lot of issues with that, but again it was very rewarding.

Recent productions have been increasingly reliant on CGI over practical effects. Have you adapted your methods to the new technology?

With FX technology the uptake is really fast, so by 2012 we were practically out of a job! What was used in the Nineties, for example, is invalid now. You had James Cameron's *The Abyss*, which utilised early CGI techniques for the very digital-looking alien water tentacle. Then in *Jurassic Park* and *Stuart Little* the technology progressed again, and they managed to solve some of the problems they had.

Now, in contemporary times the stories have evolved to take advantage of what the CGI can produce. The effects are so seamless that I really doubt animatronic characters will be lead characters anymore. There's also a point where a film can become so digital that it's questionable whether it can be classified as a live-action or animated film. Look at *Avatar*, which was 60 per cent digital.

There's still this practicality and tangibility that animatronics have over CGI effects. Do you feel we have lost something – a certain textural realism, perhaps?

Yes, we're glad to see that some directors are making a shift back to a blend of practical and digital. I think it gives a sense of realism for the audience and the actors.

Has there ever been a point in recent cinema where the digital/practical effects are so good that they become somewhat seamless?

I was impressed with what they did in *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*. The solution they came up with for the character of Vision was seamless. Originally, what was to be practical make-up became a fantastic combination of digital and practical. The lengths the digital department went to – to use as much of the actor's [Paul Bettany] face as possible – were astounding.

What have you been working on recently?

We've been doing a lot of work for costume and wardrobe departments on films like *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *Gods Of Egypt*; specifically cutting out foam copies of the actors that have been scanned. They then have 100 per cent copies of them for making tattoos, costumes, armoury, etc. We are also cutting out a lot of large-scale sculptures and set pieces with our CNC router for films currently in production in Australia.

Where do you see the future for animatronics in the movies?

That's difficult to say, but going on from what we have seen recently I would say that animatronics have become an under-utilised solution. There have been films such as *The Force Awakens* that used animatronics very well – not in the spotlight, but there were a lot of practical aliens and robots in a few scenes. There's always a need for a 'man in suit' approach, and hopefully many filmmakers will use that option when it is presented to them. ☞

You can learn more about John Cox's work at www.johncox.net.



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BACK TO BASICS

1. What species is Sookie Stackhouse?
2. What is the title of *True Blood*'s premiere episode?
3. At which bar does Sookie work as a waitress?
4. What is vampire blood known as on the show?
5. What is the name of Sookie's grandmother?

FANGS FOR THE MEMORIES

6. Who was the first vampire to visit Bon Temps after they went public about their existence?
7. How does Godric commit suicide in Season Two?

8. What is the name of Bill Compton's first and only progeny?
9. Who is Bill's maker?
10. What is the name of the vampire bar run by Eric Northman?

DEAD SERIOUS

11. What is the name of Sookie's best friend?
12. What is Lafayette's main occupation?
13. In which episode does Eric first kiss Sookie?
14. What is the name of the palm-reader who becomes Season Four's main antagonist?

15. What witch becomes Lafayette's love interest in the third season?

HUMANS

16. Who created the show?
17. Which author wrote the books the show was originally based around?
18. What is the name of the book series the show is based on?
19. How many seasons of *True Blood* are there?
20. What is the title of the song featured in the show's opening credits?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

BILL COMPTON

They say people get smarter with age; good job you're a heck of a lot older than most, though you might want to work on that attitude. It tends to put teammates off. Remember, there's no 'I' in 'team'.

11-15

LAFAYETTE REYNOLDS

You might not be the smartest of all your friends, but you've managed to smart-talk your way to the top. Fake it until you make it. Everyone wants you on their team.

6-10

SOOKIE STACKHOUSE

You follow your heart as opposed to your head, which works well for your love life, but it's not much use in a quiz. Leave your drama at the door and concentrate!

0-5

JASON STACKHOUSE

Wow. You really are an idiot. We're sorry, but no one is willing to team up with you. But don't let it get you down; maybe you're stronger alone. We'll soon find out.

ANSWERS: 1. HALFUNG 2. 'STRANGE LOVE' 3. MERLOTTE'S BAR AND GRILL 4. 'V' OR 'V JUICE' 5. ADELE STACKHOUSE 6. BILL COMPTON 7. HE EXPOSES HIMSELF TO SUNLIGHT 8. JESSICA HAMBY 9. LORENA BALL 10. FANGTASIA 11. TARA THORNTON 12. HE'S A SHORT ORDER COOK AT MERLOTTE'S 13. SEASON THREE, EPISODE TEN ('I SMELL A RAT') 14. MARLINE STONEBROOK 15. JESUS VELASQUEZ 16. ALAN BALL 17. CHARLAINE HARRIS 18. THE SOUTHERN VAMPIRE MYSTERIES 19. SEVEN 20. 'BAD THINGS'

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